



CLASSICAL AMERICA

ON THE COVER: *The main façade of the New York Custom House, embellished by two allegorical sculptures by Daniel Chester French. America, on the left, is seated on a block decorated with pre-Columbian hieroglyphs. A long-billed bird, reminiscent of the creatures carved on totem poles, rises behind her, while an Indian in a war bonnet and chaps peers over her right shoulder.*

The torch in the figure's right hand is an emblem of enlightenment or liberty. Her sandaled foot is poised upon the head of the plumed serpent sacred to the Aztecs. Other symbolic elements at the statue's base include an eagle, a cactus, an Indian jar and basket, and the skull of a long-horned steer.

America wears a garment suggesting the costumes seen in works by the painter Millet or the sculptor Meunier, both of whom specialized in working class subjects. Her full cape is flung back by her left arm, which rests on the shoulder of a crouching, nude workman. He holds a tool in his left hand and steadies the winged wheel of Commerce with his right. Both the worker and *America* wear the Phrygian cap of liberty.

The statue of *Europa*, on the right, sits on a square-backed Grecian throne, the base of which is ornamented by a bas-relief adapted from the celebrated Parthenon frieze depicting the Panathenaic procession. Men with horses dominate the west side of the block, while the east face shows four horses led by a man on foot.

The shrouded personage to the rear is the Tiburtine or Cumean Sibyl, one of various women of Antiquity reputed to possess powers of divination. The figure is modelled on the sibyls painted by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, but instead of the usual book or scroll French's seer holds an orb, a symbol of dominion. A laurel circlet around the orb suggests the imperial future of Europe.

As if to fulfill this prophecy, *Europa's* right arm rests on the huge, clasped book of laws, the secret of her supremacy and power. Beneath the book is a globe of the world, her empire. Ropes of pearls entwined in her hair are also symbolic of wealth and domination.

Europa wears a breastplate of the type associated with Athena Parthenos, patron goddess of Athens. Her peplos, or overskirt, is embroidered with the arms of the European states, including England, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Italy, and the Helvetic Confederation. On her head she wears the *Corona Muralis*, a crown in the shape of a crenellated wall which is emblematic of cities.

Three figureheads rise behind the statue's right shoulder, a Norse sea serpent, a horse and an eagle. These are surmounted in turn by the imperial eagle of Rome. The figureheads spring from the rostrum of a Roman war galley; a cable extending from the hawsehole supports an anchor, the symbol of faith or stability. On the deck there is an incense burner connoting wealth, partially covered by a furled flag which betokens nationality.

Europa's face, a robust, squarish oval, is Phidean in type and its expression of self-reliant strength, noble simplicity and calm dignity is typical of many of the great Periclean sculptor's works. The short distance between eyebrow and eyelid is a relic of archaism.

America's features are fuller and her brow broader than that of *Europa*. The bold, confident gaze of the pioneer mother seems to shine from her eyes while the features of her worker companion express studious purpose and high resolve.

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CLASSICAL AMERICA

Board of Directors: John Barrington Bayley, William A. Coles, John Anthony Day, Clark McLain, Hight Moore, Henry Hope Reed, Pierce Rice, Raymond S. Waldron, Jr., Charles G. K. Warner.

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An Explanation

For some time many of us, drawn together by mutual interest, have been deploring the low quality of the arts in the United States today. Our anger and irritation have become a habit, a habit that has served no purpose. Finally, several of us decided that there was little point in perpetual complaining; what had to be done was to find an instrument to which we could contribute. If the instrument did not exist, we would create one.

From the start we have felt that there was only one way to refute the valueless artistic fashions of today: a thorough examination of the heritage of Western art as manifested in the United States. All we had to do was to look across America, from the National Capitol to the San Francisco City Hall, from Brooklyn's Soldiers and Sailors Monument to the gardens of Miami's Villa Vizcaya, from Edwin Howland Blashfield's mural decoration in the Hudson County Courthouse in Jersey City to Eugene L. Masqueray's Basilica of St. Mary in St. Paul, Minnesota. There is not an American city, not an American town but can boast of some Classical touch. Our greatest public buildings, our best statues, our best memorials, our finest mural decorations, our monumental avenues, all testify to the wealth of America's Classical heritage.

Beyond what the past has handed down there is the fact that, in architecture most of all, the Classical tradition has continued to thrive, mostly in variations on the theme of the Colonial Revival. What is more, this Classical tradition has persisted in the face of powerful opposition.

Looking again across the nation, we tried to discover some existing instrument, a university, magazine or society which had as aim the sustaining of the Classical tradition. On finding it we would rally to help it further the Classical. We found not a one. We had no alternative but to forge our own instrument, and this we have done in launching CLASSICAL AMERICA.

In our invitation to join CLASSICAL AMERICA, we the founders, now Directors, stated that it was a society formed to promote the Classical tradition in the arts in America. This would involve exploring America's Classical past and it would involve a continuing discussion and inquiry into the nature of the Classical. As a first effort we have mailed to members William R. Ware's *The American Vignola* and Geoffrey Scott's *The Architecture of Humanism*. And it is to the same end that the Directors are publishing the magazine, *Classical America*.

The Directors are only too well aware of the difficulties ahead. Starting as we do with a clean slate, we see our responsibility in a process of self-education with the members, joining together to study the Classical. Both *The American Vignola* and *The Architecture of*

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Humanism, for example, are basic texts in the study of the Classical point of view. Whenever possible the Directors will send similar texts to members, as well as making available related books at reduced prices.

Beyond this duty we see it as essential to provide a forum for members. This is the prime object of *CLASSICAL AMERICA*. In the first issue there is an article examining Classical values, another on the design of a Classical country residence, a notice on the symbolism of a bronze vase at Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza, a review of an art magazine given over to painting and "The Academy," and several drawings of Classical work in New York. They represent, for the most part, the backward glance which must come before stepping to the future.

Subsequent issues will continue to explore America's Classical heritage, to analyse the quality of the Classical contribution, and to point to Classical work done in recent decades. This last, for example, will consist of lists, compiled by members, of new Classical work found in various parts of the country. Members are invited to join in the business of making surveys, just as they are invited to send in comments, letters and articles on the many aspects of the Classical tradition.

Obviously the strength of the Society will depend on the interest and cooperation of the members. There is much to be done; the more members join in the work the more rapid will be the advance of the Society to its final goal, the renaissance of the Classical spirit in these United States.

A word as to threats to great examples of American Classical art: while preservation and conservation are secondary to its goal, the Society will share in any effort to defend the nation's Classical heritage from destruction and vandalism.

On the practical side of the Society's affairs, the work to date has devolved on the Directors and certain members. There is no paid staff. Quite obviously the Directors look forward to the time when the Society will be able to afford a staff. *CLASSICAL AMERICA* has been incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of New York. The Directors have made application to the Internal Revenue Service for the privilege of receiving tax-deductible donations and subventions. It is our hope and expectation that this will be granted in due time.

Meanwhile, the Directors invite members to continue their interest in *CLASSICAL AMERICA* and, whenever possible to urge sympathetic friends and acquaintances to join.

HENRY HOPE REED

The Classical Ideal and the “Gran Rifiuto” of Contemporary Art

After the upheavals we have known, and in an age like ours when man amasses experiences only to master them so badly, nothing would profit the artist or writer more than to meditate the lesson of the great achievements of Western art which deserve the name “Classical.” By this we mean that *eternal Classicism* which has, to be sure, its golden ages but whose power endures inexhaustibly, far beyond the schools and styles that spring directly from it.

Unfortunately, if we examine our age through the interpreters who claim to express its movements, its central tendencies and its very direction, we find no lesson so completely, so violently, indeed so aggressively rejected as that of Classicism. Nothing is rarer today than the artist who willingly instructs himself in his art, with all that this word implies in terms of practice, reflection, and basic exercises, of work ceaselessly renewed, of humble patience in the school of the masters. Why would he want such an apprenticeship when so many voices urge him to disregard it? “Be yourself,” “Follow your own inclination,” “Cultivate your eccentricity,” the sirens vie in singing; “What others can do in your place is most to be avoided.”

Young people hear this song only too clearly. To hear it with impunity they would have to have the strength to bind themselves, and to masts stronger than those of our drifting ships. Originality, efforts at renewal, research for the sake of research, art of avant-garde, art of the laboratory, or art of the experiment—all are key words of the ruling anti-conformity. And this is nothing but a new conformity which, from the start, cancels the formative, individualizing strength of the schools, the studios and the conservatories. There is no true originality without long testing of oneself and one's means; to serve this end is precisely the purpose of apprenticeship. No doubt every creator is unique in his vision and his expression of the world, but he becomes a creator only by accepting the universal experience and the mastery of forms which have come down to him through the ages. Our Moderns, who regard themselves as unique from the start, imagine that bold-

ness makes study unnecessary and that, in order to express themselves, all they need do is reject universal experience and make a *tabula rasa* of the past.

An astonishing phenomenon results. Although the means to make the works of the past available have developed to an extraordinary degree, there has developed at the same time a very real intolerance for the lessons which these works can provide. In vain do efforts at artistic education spread and commemorative exhibitions and festivals multiply. Equally futile are the travelling exhibits of art collections, the concerns and broadcasts which ceaselessly contribute to the spread of the masters not only of yesterday but of the day before yesterday. (This last was not the case until the seventeenth century; before then programs had been limited to the works of contemporaries or immediate predecessors.) All of this increase in consumable riches has, it would seem, only nourished the denials of a futurism that continues to feed upon itself. Music, architecture, the plastic arts, poetry, theatre, even the novel—no domain escapes this striving for a rupture which, for the first time in the history of art, would be total.

Have we put too much emphasis on education? Or, rather, have we perverted its very principle in thinking that our artistic culture is being enriched when we are in truth robbing it of its values? The man of today is already overwhelmed by the complexity of his past. In seeking to introduce him to all epochs and all civilizations have we not dangerously compromised the possibility of his acquiring that profound education in depth which is necessarily more selective and narrow at the base but which alone stands a chance of assuring the creative vitality of the West by preserving the integrity of its genius? Is it not, in a word, the very notion of a Universal Museum that must be indicted? Or has the man of today, intoxicated even by the word “liberation,” reached the point where he fears all instruction as slavery?

In any case, it is a fact that the new kind of creator impugns the masters just as he rejects the

idea of craftsmanship. He likewise rejects standards and forms, all the more because they are linked to those which prevailed in the greatest epochs. If the Western artist admits any sympathies it is for forms that have come from certain parts of Africa, Oceania and Pre-Columbian America—civilizations which are best calculated to uproot us and shatter our values. His hostility to Classical structures is equally obvious in his preference for so-called primitive works where he seems to discern (often mistakenly) an attempt at distortion. Or, again, it appears in his preference for those categories which, like the Baroque in literature or the fantastic in the plastic arts, represent to him the thrust of a revolt or revenge against rules and decorum, a revenge by that deep subconscious which the organizing will holds in check. In all areas he is against selection and composition. He is for mixed genres and overlapping arts, for automatic writing, for “collages,” for “objects,” and for “sounds.” He is for all varieties of experience and always for the *dissolution* of form. A secret logic sets him against any natural sentiments. The aim of art is not to delight man but to lacerate him. Hostile to creation, he invents tricks. He means to reduce reality by the imaginary or by the abstract. He likes to put songs out of tune, to dissolve tones, to jumble lines to throw volumes out of balance, to disrupt and to disconcert. He speaks freely of “rhythms” but he detests eurhythmy. In the same way he often talks of “language,” seemingly to exalt its powers, in reality to explode it. Abrupt, shrill, harsh, antilyrical, his aesthetic is the direct opposite of that which emerges, exalted and luminous, from the greatest moments of human creativity.

There is, in fact, in the curve of all great artistic civilizations—and how better to assure oneself of this than at the foot of the Parthenon?—a point of perfection where the outline of the forms encloses matter fashioned without excess of blemish, where content and form appear as the interior and exterior of a happy completeness, where the soul radiates like the Ideal Form that is nourished by the body without being coarsened by it. All is said that needs to be said. Moreover, everything is mastered simply, organically, like life itself, but an exemplary life, one no longer subject to the vicissitudes of fortune. Lyricism in statute and temple—here all is rhythm, the columns themselves are a song like the Homeric hymns, a solemn and luminous song, intense and pure—a religious song already touched by the dawn of that Grace which will overcome Fate.

The voice, always true, need not strain; it comes from the distant reaches of the soul to enliven even the silences of the hymn. The work is rich, but its richness knows no excess because all is felt and modeled from within, at the very source. Nothing is emphasized because nothing has to be: controlled eloquence is most moving. All of this is sustained by an exact standard of means, effects, and perspective. This standard can be absorbed and felt, but no more than in the beating of a heart or in the nobility of a song raised on high. Then a great joy is born in the spirit of the beholder, a joy that is difficult to convey, but unquestionable from the moment of its birth: serious, solemn, marvelous, almost painful in the first assault of the shock it causes us but soon inundating us with light and peace. Moreover, the shock subsists below the surface as if to rekindle endlessly what can be called “the sensation of the impossible made real.” It is too beautiful to be true, and yet it is true. What was unbelievable has come to pass. Pure beauty is there before us, rejecting as illusory all surrounding human agitation, as if the earth and sky had suddenly joined. So it is that, in this world of pain, where we never cease to collide with experiences of dissatisfaction and failure, we are given, by and within beautiful works of art, the assurance of a possible perfection which links us to the eternal. Such is the inexhaustible power of classic art at its summit, whether it be at Athens, Chartres, or Versailles, Ravenna, Florence or Salzburg; whether it be in Racine or Sophocles, in Johann Sebastian Bach or in Gregorian chant, in Mozart, no less than in Beethoven.

It is this quality which the artist of our time rejects, either because he is not in a state to hear the music of perfection, or because he senses that this perfection will judge him, or because he suffers from a certain deficiency of creative gifts. Precisely because he dreads nothing so much as an awareness of sterile or discordant elements within himself, he indoctrinates himself with an aesthetic of subversion that tends to become truly demonic because its values are so inverted. They produce an aesthetics of architecture which enslaves man in the guise of freeing him. It is an aesthetics of asymmetry and disharmony of the nonfigurative and the atonal, of formlessness and noise, an aesthetics of “anti-literature”: a-poetry, anti-theater and anti-novel. This is also the source of the contemporary artists' favorite themes which, although certainly varied, always tend more or less to question reality, to disqualify it with black comedy and to disintegrate it with a burst of

absurdity or strangeness. He cultivates ambiguity knowing full well its power to dissolve. It seems that he lives only to destroy and to destroy himself; his response to the atomized object is a sardonic consciousness which delights in multiplying its own contradictions. His adventure has a glow of anarchy and the seductions of licentiousness are his spiritual bond to the world of sorcery. Blood, voluptuousness, and death haunt his dreams; intoxication is his passion, madness the limit of his horizon. The ugly, the horrible and the demonic do not frighten him; he sees them as conquests of liberty which, under the cover of depth psychology, are nothing but a flight into the abyss.

Nihilist, Surrealist and Freudian: fascinated by the dark sun of negative values, the artist invites his chosen hero to a descent to hell. It is hardly surprising that divine beauty is his preferred target. If he forgets himself one day and creates beautiful forms, he hastens to disfigure them. "One evening I put beauty on my lap. I found her bitter. And I abused her."² We are at the antipodes of the pure Classical concept where beauty always signifies the victory over the monstrous. Athena, protectress of heroes, and Apollo, father of the Muses, who was at first the Pythian Apollo: all the lessons of these myths of light and civilization now are radically reversed. Far from rescuing Andromeda, our modern Perseus would derive more enjoyment from delivering her to the monster.

It is essential to understand that this is not merely a contemporary, more bitter repetition of the old quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns. When the moderns of former times used liberty to broaden rules which they judged too narrow, they had no intention of pushing that liberty as far as anarchy. They gave themselves leeway without refusing the benefits of restraint; the romantics, Wagner, the Impressionists, the partisans of free verse and, in our own time, Paul Claudel, did likewise. They raised no further objections to the supremacy of beauty in art but claimed only to enlarge this concept by opening it to more expressive or more dramatic modalities.³ Our own moderns—or those at least (and they are legion) who claim to interpret current aesthetics—are radical in a very different way. They direct their attacks against beauty and art itself, much as they attack all discipline and positive value, everything that is capable of mastering the raw contribution of the instinct or the instant and of organizing it through the intermediary of intelligence into a finished work. Such a work

should be an eternal possession of mankind, *monumentum aere perennius* ["a monument more lasting than bronze"]⁴.

It is precisely this aesthetic of achievement (*accomplissement, vollendung*) which utterly repels the Modern spirit insofar as it is revolutionary. This rejection explains all the others. Choice, rule, form, suitability, composition, organic unity, style, harmony, hierarchy and universality, all receive a death-blow from this *gran rifiuto* [great rejection] which our moderns oppose to the age-old yearnings that induce man to "keep up appearances" (*Σωξεν ἑαυταίμενα* ⁵) to conquer the disorder around and within himself, to dominate the realm of the perishable in order to extract from it a *Κτήμα τ ἐς αἰ* ["a possession for all time"]⁶, to build the City and himself beneath the sun of true values of which God is the principle and beauty the splendor. These yearnings imply that man is both aware of a transcendence which unifies him as it draws him upwards, and engaged in a determined struggle against that part of himself which pulls him toward chaos in order to destroy him. For the artist, the Classical ideal defines the aims of such a struggle; it also assesses his victories, which are often hard-fought and always precarious.

We sorely mistake the principle of Classicism (and indeed the lesson of that Greece which taught it to the world) if we limit ourselves, as did Renan, to talk of proportion, reason, serenity and harmony. No doubt what he said was true, as are all the statements and restatements about economy of means, control of effect, the fitness of parts to each other and of the whole to its purpose, that is "fitness expressed." But we have to go further and listen more carefully to the lesson of Greece if we do not want the Classical ideal to slip into that academicism which denatures and discredits it, inviting a reaction of dangerous barbarian or anarchic thrusts. Academicism appears whenever the creative élan of an epoch withers under the false perfection of forms that have grown conventional. Proportion is nothing without an initial élan, without a passion and disproportion in need of curtailment, just as harmony is nothing if it does not represent a resolution of tension and reason is naught without fervor to fire it. The Classical is most certainly exuberance mastered, liberty yielding to law, a triumph over the temptation of Baroque;⁷ but there has to be power and life to start with! The fitness of the parts likewise characterizes only that creation which is as wholly organic as life itself. There is in it a serenity like

the repose of the seventh day, when God considers his work and sees that it is good.

Let us therefore guard against minimizing the importance of the battle of which the Classical work is the prize; it is most often a hand-to-hand struggle. The form is a gamble before being a delight, and what is won today guarantees nothing for the morrow. Besides, the gamble and the struggle are what bring to beauty, even when it appears most undisturbed, that poignant element which Winckelmann was unable to see and which stems from the anguish which all victory harbors in the face of tomorrow. Beauty constantly threatened: this is undoubtedly the most profound lesson of that Greece which was indeed aware of the chasms within and around man yet built its cities on the heights more gallantly than ever. Therefore let us preserve within ourselves a sense of an heroic Acropolis, more real than the Acropolis of Renan. The spear of Athena reminds us that virtue must never put down its arms; the enemy is always at the gates.

The essence of true Classicism, which must not be confused with any of its historical incarnations or any of the styles which claim to express it, springs as much from the ethical and spiritual as from the aesthetic. Ultimately it lies within the option man exercises when he chooses to withstand the forces that tend ceaselessly to erode him. A "long patience," an "obstinate severity,"⁸ much labor with much love and, above all else, that love of excellence which Plato taught—all of this produces masters. It is this lesson that they, in turn, can propound to that part of humanity which is always indulgent to men of wisdom.

The Classical, according to Goethe, is what is healthy. By making this statement in opposition to Romanticism, however, he overlooked the main issue. In its own way Romanticism also led the struggle against dark forces and left positive and exalted works to redeem its shadows. Classicism's true enemy

is not that Romanticism to which Goethe himself was indebted. Instead, it is Modernism in the sense explained above, Modernism insofar as it has chosen to take the side of negation. The Romantic Faust is dangerously associated with Mephistopheles; that much is certain. Nevertheless, he did not surrender the store of sacred values to his diabolical companion. Although guilty of excess, his soul at least escaped "the spirit which always denies."

The Classical is certainly what is healthy; Goethe's axiom is even truer today, when it is no longer a question of maintaining things which have endured but of rediscovering what has been lost. It is not only health but joy of heart, creative power, the instinct of song, the sense of beauty. Classicism—to speak in more general terms—is everything that testifies that normality is richer than abnormality, that the sky is deeper than the pit. It is everything that refuses to produce monstrosities and to treat love with irony, everything that proclaims that only the good has true being.

The world is a mixture of being and nothingness, where time ceaselessly gnaws at structures much as Cronos devoured his children. But the essential quality of the Classical spirit, in art as in life, is precisely that it curbs negation by forcing it to testify for being. It triumphs over chaos by means of form, it quells the powers of darkness so completely that from the very confession of man's misery there rises at last, as in the melody of a Mozart or the themes of a Beethoven, the assurance of an invincible light.

JACQUES DURON

Translated by C. G. K. Warner, W. A. Coles and H. H. Reed

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NOTES

1. Dante, *Divinia Commedia*, III, 60—*Translator's Note*.

2. Let us recall, however, that a little further on in the same text Rimbaud writes: "That time is past. Today I know how to salute beauty."

3. At first glance it would seem that Romantic art paved the way for Modernism. A closer look shows

that it translated into reality a spiritual outlook that was wholly different from and, in essence, wholly opposed to the Modern spirit of negation. First of all, Romanticism is not really an aesthetic category; it is a mistake to make it the opposite of Classicism. No doubt it fought for a certain freedom in art, and this was especially true in France. It led to a mixture of styles and a removal of forms. Nonetheless, it left a quantity of works which easily belong to an enlarged classic tradi-

tion: Shelley, Delacroix, Hölderlin, Schumann, to cite only the most unquestioned Romantics.

The Romantic is far from being a negator, a denier. Trained in the school of the masters, he retains a thorough instruction in their principles, far more than he himself believes or than we have come to believe through repeating well-learned lessons. If he means to cleanse art of academic conventions in order to bring it back to artistic truth, it is not to break with the aesthetic of the beautiful. He does not hate beauty; he only desires to see it become more complex, more vibrant, more unexpected, and more touching. He does not reject the real world even when he is raising up a world of dreams in front of it. Like all true poets he upholds the values which give meaning to life and celebrates creation even if it is often seen through his own subjectivity now that the age of great classic realism has unfortunately slipped away. "The world is my image": The Romantics too have tasted the intoxication of "idealist" thought.

In fact, Romanticism is much more a state of sensitivity than an aesthetic position. As dissatisfied as he is passionate, avid for things of this world yet aware of their essential infirmity, haunted by an infinite which escapes him, consumed by a fever dear to him, the Romantic reflects the torture of the "unhappy consciousness" and feels intensely what Hegel calls "the travail of the negative," by which is meant everything—obstacles, failures, contradictions, accidents—that besets the human adventure.

But these negative values are made to be overcome. This is the spirit's very mission, and deep within himself the Romantic does not doubt this mission. He is not so enslaved by the seductions of becoming that he fails to recognize the superiority of pure being. He too knows, as Classicists have always known, that the highest truth lies not in the unfinished but in the finished. The Romantic is a Classicist gone slack—a *delayed Classicist*. Even when beauty is denatured and made allusive, even when it is more a symbolic object than an expression of joy, it continues to rule on the horizon of his dramatic struggle. He can delight in skies filled with clouds but his heart favors the light.

4. Horace, *Odes* iii, 30—*Translator's Note*.

5. Eudemos of Rhodes—*Translator's Note*.

6. Thucydides I, 23—*Translator's Note*.

7. The concept of the Baroque and its relation to the Classical has raised many controversies ever since Wölfflin. The question presents a problem for the visual arts, where it is often difficult to separate the history of styles in the technical sense from considerations of general aesthetics. It has become more complicated by its extension to other artistic domains. In the plastic arts, the major point of contention between Classical and Baroque aesthetics seems to be the role of proportion and excess as they relate to a functional concept of structure and ornament. We are dealing with a Baroque aesthetic when ornament superabounds in its order or spills over the order onto the structure to which it is normally subservient. This is the case with so many Spanish altarpieces and so many Italian churches from the seventeenth century onward. On the other hand, we

are dealing with a Classical aesthetic when the "tectonic" of the work—to use Wölfflin's term—resists in violation by the decorative elements and subordinates them to the greater clarity of the form. (We must add, however, that when ornament stays in its place and respects purity of line the Baroque is susceptible of a perfection which rejoins the Classical: Santa Susanna in Rome, Vål-de-Grâce in Paris, St. Francis of Assisi in Ouro Preto and the Maria Plena in Salzburg.)

When the term "Baroque" is applied to the literary arts, as has often been the case in recent years, it first conjures up the idea of an abundance, a complexity of invention and expression that escapes the laws of clear composition. Shakespeare, Cervantes, Goethe of the second *Faust*, Victor Hugo's entire body of work, certain aspects of Paul Claudel can be called "Baroque" in that they sacrifice purity of line and even balance among masses to richness of detail. Their work pushes out on all sides from within. The structures become confused by the proliferation of anecdote and ornament. It is as if the creator's central power were overcome by the thrust of the individual elements, like a concert where each instrument wants to go its own way. This gives rise to an impression of irregularity and even of disproportion, of the disordered images and violent opposites which are the price of an uncontrolled profusion, a taste for theatrical display to which the vast compositions of a LeBrun or the painted cupolas of a Pietro da Cortona correspond plastically. All of these are temptations which it is the virtue of the classic ideal to overcome.

Literary Baroque connotes something else, too. If, for example, we examine the taste for the bizarre, the fantastic, and even for a certain ugliness shown by poets under Louis XIII, who were haunted by ghosts and skeletons (a taste which is to be found again among the eccentrics of Romanticism), we are led to notice a morbid and devastating side to the Baroque as distinct from its simply excessive side, an attraction for the abnormal, a latent Surrealism, an obsession with negative values which foretell the great contemporary overthrow.

Such tendencies have always existed. They were formerly held in check by the orthodoxy of positive values but have spread abroad now that this orthodoxy is weakened. From this point of view the Baroque takes on a more disquieting meaning. Instead of merely being something that resists the classic ideal with respect to formal order, it questions the spiritual order and is now the arch *adversary*.

A certain interpenetration of the two orders can be misleading. Baudelaire, for example, was completely classical in form but is at bottom a Baroque, more specifically, a demonic Baroque—and thus a *Modern*. He is the leader of the Modern poets for it was he who gave the first and most conscious expression, in the spiritual order, to that great rejection of positive values which defines the art (and thought) of our time.

8. It is the very principle of Leonardo da Vinci, who wrote in his *Notebooks*: "Remember to learn care more than facility."



Drawings by Nicholas Solovioff,
courtesy of *Fortune* Magazine.

Abutment of the Manhattan Bridge on New York's Lower East side. Designed in 1905 by Gustav Lindenthal, engineer, and Carrère & Hastings, architects.

In the American Renaissance the architect was important even in the design of engineering projects such as a bridge. In the case of the Manhattan Bridge, Carrère & Hastings not only designed the approaches in Manhattan and Brooklyn with the help of sculptors Daniel Chester French and Charles Cary Rumsey; they also were responsible for elements of the structure and its anchorages.

To convey the worth of the great city the archi-

tecs specified massive buttresses with a visual power and sense of permanence that are truly Roman. In the background to the left there can also be seen the rusticated voussiors of an arch and, high above it, the columns of a portico. Whereas recent bridges, such as the Verrazano, merely convey an impression of bulk, the mighty buttresses and majestic ornamentation of the Manhattan Bridge communicate joyful sense of power.



Here was the architecture of Venice in all its opulence, more particularly that of the buildings of the "Scuole" or religious guilds. Jewel boxes on small sites, they advertised the wealth and power of their members. The interior here, with a surcharge of eclectic decoration, gilding, grilles and plate glass, was worthy of the Paris of Napoleon III. From the lighting fixtures to the polished brass hinges, from the carving to the colors of the wall paint, good

The New York Clearing House, (demolished) at 77 Cedar Street between Broadway and Nassau Street, in Manhattan. Built between 1894 and 1896 on the designs of Robert W. Gibson.

taste and flawless maintenance had combined to restrain the hand of the "improvers" for a span of almost seventy years. It became a victim of "progress" in 1965.



Cartouches, voluted keystones, consoles (ornamented brackets), quoining, high arched entrances with elaborate molding, these and other devices offer a tapestry of ornament in bold relief. The abundant decoration, skillfully joined, conveys a sense of opulence which is wholly absent from the contemporary scene. "It is "1900 Gala" at its best.

Not surprisingly, the Ansonia has counted many

The Ansonia Hotel, 2107 Broadway at 73rd Street. Designed in 1900 by W. E. D. Stokes, with Graves & Duboy.

famous tenants, of whom the best known was the Great Ziegfeld. Certainly he was a man to appreciate the lavishness of this splendid building.

HENRY HOPE REED

Classicism and the Present Disorders

Any statement about the arts today must take as a starting point the enormous discontents and disorder of our society. The individual is out of balance with his society and his human environment just as surely, the ecologists warn us, as he is out of balance with natural environment. He suffers both from too little planning and from too much, and that generally of the wrong sort. In that way are the arts involved in this chaos? To what extent do they contribute to it? Can they help to extricate us from it? And if so, how?

It is really most extraordinary that we should even ask such questions. Formerly the arts were more likely to be the spoils of war than a corner of the battlefield where our frustrations, aggressions, and fantasies like "ignorant armies clash by night." We were accustomed to look to the arts as islands of order and sanity, ideals, goals toward which our civilization could aspire. This is especially true of Classical art, the most developed, refined and enduring system of art that Western civilization has produced.

When in the nineteenth century the Classical tradition had already been eroded, both from the inside by a misconceived individualism and a restless pursuit of originality and from the outside by a misapplied materialism, its advocates, who were strongly influenced by a neo-Classical myth of Greece, laid stress in their defenses upon the values of wholeness, harmony, and repose. Matthew Arnold's admonition to "see life steadily and see it whole" is an archetypical instance of the posture of Victorian Hellenism. However, the limitations of this position were twofold. From a practical point of view it amounted to telling a civilization burning with fever to keep calm and cool. From an intellectual and aesthetic point of view it did scant justice to the Classical tradition's enormous capacity for change or for the variety of its moods and forms, as, for instance, in the potentiality for dramatic effect of Baroque style or for the charm, intimacy, playfulness and poetry of Rococo ornament.

Now that we are again doing battle for Clas-

sicism we ought to be in a better position of advocacy than was the last century. Shifts in taste and developments in scholarship have put us in possession of an enlarged and flexible tradition or vocabulary. We can reinterpret Arnold's feeling for "wholeness" in terms of the whole repertory of a creative language which Classicism affords. We are also able to see, as Ruskin could not, that Classicism puts no real restraints upon individual achievement, but rather concentrates its opportunities.

However, there is another dimension of Arnold's feeling for wholeness that we ought to attend to today, more than at any other time in human history. Classicism is the only system of art which embraces the idea of total design—with emphasis upon both wholeness or totality and the artistic and decorative functions of the designer. It is urban and urbane in its values. It is concerned with the relation of a building to its street and to its city. It aims for the larger vision, the terrace, the square, the boulevard, the circle. It would please the eye with a variety of perspectives and reward it with climactic vistas.

But Classicism is concerned with wholeness in yet another way: with the *combination* of the arts, their harmonious participation in a *decorative* scheme. Architecture asks to be completed by decorative painting and sculpture and by stonework, mosaic, woodwork, metalwork and a host of other crafts. It even calls upon the landscape architect to complete the total design by bringing art and nature into balance and harmony. It can never be content with the endless repetition of a boring "structural drama" of unrelieved glass and concrete and steel.

The feeling for wholeness is manifest in such fundamental elements of Classical training as the study of The Orders. For here the artist is initiated into the refinements of proportion and scale which give unity and balance to a design. And he learns how to adjust the elements of his composition and his decorative details to achieve the precise effect intended. He is aware that architecture is not determined by one single element, such as function,

but is a whole design which gives unified expression to practical uses, structural possibilities and the decorative purposes of art. So too, painting is neither color, nor light, nor composition, nor drawing, but a *combination* of techniques to realize a meaningful subject.

It is this feeling for wholeness which ought to strike us today with special urgency. The problems of our environment, of ecological imbalance: what are they but the result of many individual acts, inventions, discoveries, made without understanding of the way each would affect the total balance of our life and world? They are the outcome, not of malicious intention, but of partial views. It is the whole tendency of Classicism to counter this narrowness and to contain materialism and technology by incorporating them within the designs of art.

Above all it is essential for us to bear in mind that the same narrowness and partial vision that have threatened to destroy our natural environment are also destroying our human environment, our

cities. The highway builders, the redevelopers, the city planners, the dehumanized architects of glass and concrete have made our cities what they are today. Neglect is not the villain. Neglect produces Dublins, not Detroit. Our cities were *designed* into chaos, but designed according to a Modernist aesthetic which worships function and the machine and scorns humanity and permanence, which had contempt for the very notion of the city and was itself spawned by a suburban ideal. For thirty or forty years it has rolled onward with little opposition to its present dominance and academic control of every institution and publication. Before our environment can be transformed, they—and we—must be transformed and brought again properly to understand and admire the *wholeness* of the Classical ideal which we have abandoned. Herein lies the *real* crusade, the genuine revolution for the future. To it we must dedicate ourselves and the work of our organization.

WILLIAM A. COLES

A Personal Account

Those of us who attended the Harvard Graduate School of Design in the early Forties felt that we stood at the very heart of the Modern Movement. The feeling filled us with considerable élan; we knew we were on to a good thing. "Watch our dust!" we cried in effect, as we ruthlessly wrote off any faculty members or courses that we deemed not "with it." The world was to be saved and fascism defeated by DESIGN, and we were to be the designers. Unwitting heirs of Romanticism, we even published a pamphlet entitled "An Opinion on Architecture." In it we defined the architect's role in society as that of the masterbuilder-creator, much in the manner of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, with Mumfordian overtones.

This Faustian hubris was soon demolished by heady gusts of Marxism; the result was the magazine *Task*, published between 1941 and 1948. To the editors of *Task* it didn't make much difference what the buildings were like. If they were stylistically Modern and sociologically proper, they were good.

World War II sent me to Paris for my tour of duty. One of the first things I did in France was to make a pilgrimage to Corbusier. My studies at Harvard had been based on his work, but I had never see one of his buildings. Now I visited them all. One charming house was a period piece of the Twenties. It was at Ville d'Avray, a suburb of Paris, and it was a sunny afternoon in winter. The deserted villa had served as a German command post. As I wandered about I tried to imagine the life that had been led there. The victrola is playing a *disque* by Red Nichols and His Five Pennies; a new number of *transition* has just arrived. Outside the Voisin CV.34, loaded with suitcases papered with hotel and steamship labels, awaits under the porte-cochère. The air is heavy with goings-out and goings-on; it's Modern at its peak. From here on out it was to be dull, duller, dulltest.

I had in the meantime been joined by colleagues from Harvard. We soon discovered that the details we had most admired in Corbusier's work were stock items in the functional vernacular of the *région parisienne*. And his buildings were small-

scaled and grim: Potemkin villages for a remote era.

Our barracks were high in Montmartre. Early in the morning we would get on our bicycles and coast down the slopes of the mount to the Opéra, on through Rue de la Paix, Place Vendôme, Rue Castiglione, Rue de Rivoli, Place de la Concorde and up the Champs Élysées to the Étoile, to arrive at last at our office on Avenue Wagram. There, standing at a French window and staring out at the city over the clipped trees of the Avenue, we deemed the modern movement curious indeed.

After such apostasy it was out of the question to continue in architecture. All architects are Modern architects, I reasoned, and concluded that the Classical "breakthrough" might have a better chance of occurring via interior decoration. People wanted rooms; after that they might want houses from my designs, and then clubs, and hotels and churches and. . . . I imagined that things would go on very much as they always had; that the great cities of our Eastern seaboard would be ruled by a world of fashion dominated in turn by arbiters of taste whose patronage would be imitated by the rest of the country. With these ideas in mind I went to work for McMillen, Inc. I stayed a year, and every day was a joy. Had I stayed longer I would have discovered then and there that my ideas about a Classical breakthrough via fashion were completely mistaken.

During my stay at the American Academy in Rome from 1947 to 1950 I had found many devotees of Romanesque and Early Christian architecture, for the academic award system of teacher's pets insures a cultural lag that can embrace several professional generations. Nervous titters greeted praise of the Baroque. Upon viewing the panorama of Rome from the Janiculum, one Harvard Fellow remarked: "The only thing to do is pull it all down, and build good housing." Rome wasn't fashionable yet. The Moderns all went off to exciting Scandinavia, Switzerland and the Germanies. Reared on the *boiseries* and perspectives of the Ile de France, I didn't like Rome much either.

The city is so fragmented by over a century of insensate destruction that it is hard to like at first. Then come the discoveries: the courtyards, the

walks at night, the fanes within fanes, the tombs within tombs, façades, Antiquity, painted chambers, marble, water, gold, and all the rest until one cannot get enough. But this is not the place for a description of the marvels of Rome or of the lessons they impart.

"THE PEOPLE'S PALACE"

Circumstances forced me to take up residence on an island in the Bay of Naples. I had brought down from Rome two trunks full of pictures of Classical art. I had to devise a system of putting them into books where they could be referred to instantly during crises of design.

The historical approach by countries and centuries was absolutely out of the question. If I chose to look up DOMES, I wanted to see all domes at a glance. No Byzantine or Mughal domes, of course, just the domes of Rome and their analogues. I spread all the pictures over the floor of several rooms and started putting likes together. The result was a system based on hierarchies.

Sculpture came first, since I thought it the most perfect representation of man. My second category was painting. The arrangement of subjects within the categories started with the great themes of sacred history and mythology, continued on through the various achievements and activities of man until "representation" ended with still life. The same system was pursued with ornament (human figures, animals, flora, geometry), walls (free-standing columns, pilasters, moldings), architectural compositions (from central block with dome and drum, free-standing temple front and flanking wings ending in pavilions, down to a simple box). Finally all the elements of Classical art had been arranged in fifteen volumes. I dubbed by scrapbooks "The People's Palace," mindful that one of the glories of Classicism is its essential democracy. Its noblest works belong as much to the public as to the popes, emperors and kings who commissioned them.

Since Classical art is free from exterior necessity and form is everything, the system worked very well. I have gone on at this length about it because it offers an approach to the teaching of Classical art which, to my knowledge, is not found elsewhere. Art history either deals in influences (v. Geoffrey Scott, "The Biological Fallacy," in *The Architecture of Humanism*) or serves as a Baedeker when ideally it should deal with values. "The People's Palace" establishes hierarchies, but it would take a philosopher to carry them further in the realms of value, where they truly belong.

THE COLONY THAT FAILED

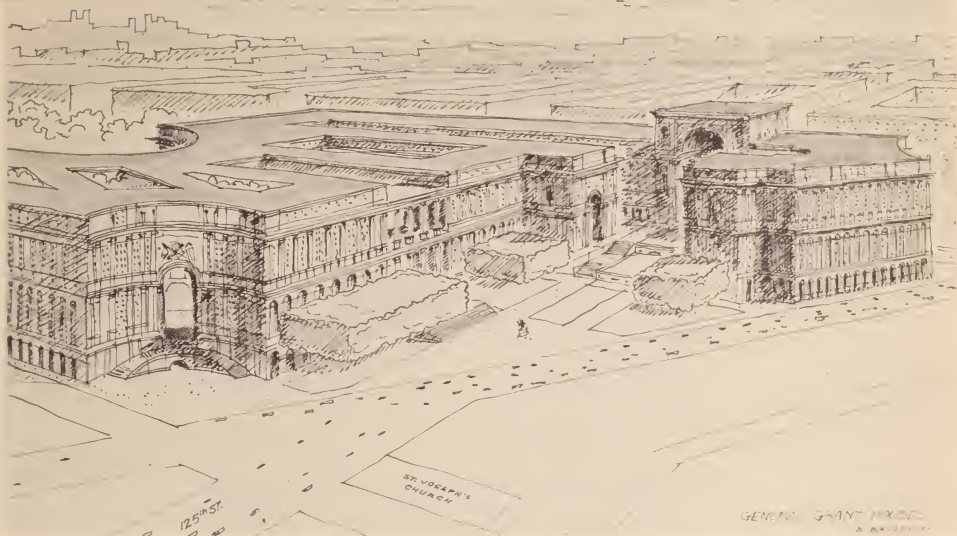
Back in the States I began giving lectures in the hope of furthering Classicism. The lectures finally boiled down to a single one, "The Magnificence of Rome," which traced the Piazza Navona from remote antiquity through the Baroque to 1870. The lecture ended with a little fable which I borrowed from Salvador Dali. He described the acanthus leaf as the immortal morphological symbol of the West (as the lotus is of the East), and went on the recount how this leaf had hardened itself into first Corinthian capital in Greece, had been apothetic in Imperial Rome, had shrivelled in the Dark Ages, had been nuptial in the Renaissance, heavy and fecund in the Baroque, orgiastic in the Rococo, modest and haughty under Napoleon, neurotic and mad in Art Nouveau and was now confined to the insane asylum, forgotten by all. "But precisely while no one is thinking about it, this leaf is born anew in the cracks of some new ruin."

Since it was implied that the new ruin was of steel and glass I imagined that my audiences would immediately see that Modernism was dead and that the future lay with the lessons of Rome. Alas, the lectures were accepted as travelogues. I didn't know then that, for the modern traveller, Rome is just another place in the sun.

A number of exhibits were arranged to supplement the lectures. The first, entitled "Ars in Urbe," took place at Yale in 1953. Pictures, sculptures and tapestries showing the Roman vision of the city from the Renaissance down to the great Depression had been borrowed for the occasion from museums and dealers. It was a magnificent show, but was greeted with hostility in *The New York Times*. This had a blighting effect upon several academic careers; otherwise no results were forthcoming.

Despite its novelty, Classicism renewed was getting nowhere. Perhaps our efforts had been too panoramic. We would throw one dart rather than the whole quiver, and "Roman Scale" opened at the Boston Museum. It was a modest offering which showed Roman doors, windows, columns and other elements in conjunction with human figures. I had taken the photographs in Rome especially with this end in view. It was a humble show; the photographs were small; nothing happened.

I went to work in an architect's office in New York. During my first four years there I would go back after the office had closed for the day and work up Classical solutions for some of the current building programs. These designs were displayed at



Among the sketches displayed in the 1957 exhibit was this design for the General Grant Houses, a municipal housing project located at Amsterdam Avenue and 125th Street, New York City.

a gallery in 1957 and 1958.

Except for the plan for Washington Square South, which proposed a magnified Rue de Rivoli with nineteenth century Roman overtones, the buildings were all drawn to a colossal scale based on the motor car rather than the human figure. Modern buildings may be gigantic, but because they are sheets of glass or cellular multiplications their size is not conveyed to the observer. A sixty-foot Corinthian column, as in Vespasian's Temple of the Sun, *does* look colossal—which is only to hint in passing at the majesty and grandeur which lie in store for us when material progress is finally hitched to Classicism.

The show's catalogue stated very correctly that the purpose of the exhibit was "to suggest a manner whereby the Classical idiom in architecture can be applied without incongruity to the twentieth century city." Both the *Times* and the *Daily News* gave the show good notices, but only one drawing was sold. The next show was much the same, except that this time the theme was the redesign of Lincoln Center

and there were no notices in the papers.

The last show was "Classical Brooklyn." Henry Hope Reed and I spent the weekends of one summer touring the borough and photographing Classical façades and details. Horse-tamers, triumphal arches, obelisks, tripods, colonnades, urns: our pictures recorded them all. The catalogue notes provided elaborate explanations of the origins and meanings of these forms. The show opened; the show closed. And that was that.

WHY WE FAILED

There have been shows, lectures, books, articles and talks for twenty years now, with absolutely no results either in terms of commissions or in the climate of opinion and taste. We have no audience and no converts. If all the people who believe in Classical art as a viable commodity were put into a Carey bus there would still be plenty of empty seats.

Where did we fail? First of all, I think we were mistaken in addressing ourselves to the *haute bo-*

hème. The people who attended our exhibitions and lectures and read our articles and books were all liberal, nice, travelled, educated and comfortably off. Their fathers and grandfathers had been important figures, but somehow the power and the cash nexus had drifted out of their descendants' reach. In compensation they turned to culture and to being "terribly nice." They passionately adore the aura of success, which makes them an intensely conservative group, i.e., one hundred per cent Modern. The *stoopie-genteels* patter after the bandwagon, and the exhaust fumes are incense in their nostrils.

We had also imagined that allies might be found among the ranks of old and distinguished architects and artists. Not at all; in fact, it was quite the reverse. We found them to be complete success-pragmatists, a fact which, let it be noted in passing, helps explain how the Moderns were able to take over the art world so swiftly and thoroughly.

Our approach was all wrong. It might have worked after World War I when "Society" still meant something. After the Second World War, Establishments clustered like the towers of San Gimignano and publicity replaced Social Position. Our efforts were like playing tennis on a golf course.

Like the withering of Society, the decline of New York as a city contributes to the seemingly unassailable stasis which preserves the Modern Movement. New York is no longer a great theater of life. The urban exodus has made it a work city, and Rousseau's Noble Savage is largely to blame. Modernism is the last chapter of Romanticism, which Irving Babbitt defined as "the Odyssey of the self-centred self." The Romantic is a lonely, alienated being who does not rejoice in the agora or forum, the teeming boulevard or piazza. The self-centred self is fundamentally anti-urban. Wright's intensely romantic "prairie style" houses were suburban.

Two of the direct products of the Romantic Odyssey are the psychiatrist and the sociologist. One tells the transgressor that he is "very interesting"; the other tells him he is a victim of society. With these two neoscientific determinisms firmly entrenched, there is no such thing as Free Will, the basis of law. Order becomes impossible when we are no longer held accountable for our actions, and the city suffers accordingly.

Classicism belongs in New York, the nation's definitive seat of power. An escape into the past is always possible in cities in Europe. Here there is no successe: we face the facts of our time head on. The problems of art and the city will be solved here, and

when they are New York will revive as a great and complete metropolis.

UNDER THE ACADEMIC UMBRELLA

If, as slowly became apparent, shows and lectures for Society members—read *haute bohème*—of a rapidly declining city were not the answer, why didn't we seek out Academia? Ever since World War II the great universities have been flourishing city-states, tax exempt and accountable to no one. What an ideal spot for the launching of an aesthetic and philosophical revolution!

Alas, the professoriate came into power under the New Deal. They hated the America where they had been as naught, that same America which had nurtured the American Renaissance in places like Newport, Lake Forest and New York's Fifth Avenue. They were or are Veblenites to a man; the American Renaissance was just so much Conspicuous Waste. In addition, the Modern Movement required exegesis, and they were exegetes. The takeover of the universities by the Moderns was almost instantaneous. Any opposition in the schools of art and architecture was undermined by the success of the Modern Movement, for these schools follow commercial and professional success, i.e., publicity, the way a greyhound follows a mechanical rabbit. (This figure of speech comes from Joseph Hudnut, former Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He was in a position to know.) The Moderns now reap the rewards of their conquest, the incalculable wealth which the universities have accumulated over the centuries.

CLASSICISM AND THE NEW LEFT

There is absolutely nothing new about the New Left, yet there is something rather attractive about all those tousled heads full of idealism, however misguided. As the Jesuit said: "We hate Communism but love Communists." Our national policy can give people a secure and comfortable existence with trips to the sun and early retirement, but this is not enough. People do want causes and singing tomorrows and the New Jerusalem and, as I told a group of hippies in the talk summarized below, this is what Classicism, and Classicism can bring about.

"Friends . . . first may I begin by describing your world as I see it. To me it is like the world of the Stone Age savages in New Guinea, as shown in the film *Mondo Cane*. They live in communes or tribes, and their first loyalties are to the tribe which

brings them security and togetherness. There can be familial or sexual nexi, but friendship doesn't exist because they don't trust each other. In the primitive world dreams and daydreams merge in fantasies and drug-induced happiness. Superstition is rife, as are witchcraft and magic. The primitive world is subjective because the savage is purblind; your neoprimitive world is much the same. Subjectivism is characterized by introspection and by the belief that all knowledge is merely relative, which denies the possibility of objective knowledge of intrinsic values.

"I don't think anyone can object to your bright visual cocktails of Op and Pop or to the other ephemera of novelty and shock, but there is a saturnine and daemonic side to your world which must be condemned on moral grounds. Many of you cultivate private hells; the climate of artificial euphoria fosters monstrous growths which are then embodied in psychotic or obscene painting and sculpture. Abstraction itself is essentially a form of low-grade magic. You stare at shapes or lines until something significant appears, much as they do in voodoo cults. Subjectivism rejects both man and nature; it is nihilism, the rule of nothingness where the eyes turn inward in self-regard. It has been a long trip from Rousseau's Noble Savage and *The Sorrows of Werther*, but I think we have arrived at the last stop of the self-centered self.

"Modern architecture has long since exhausted its intellectual capital although it keeps on repeating earlier phases and mannerisms. (The new Yale Art School—recently burned—is nothing but Constructivism and *de Stijl*.) The dark side of the current picture is reflected in the New Brutalism that shaped the Whitney Museum, as well as in the aping of the Dark Ages (any number of modern fanes with spooky interiors and violent silhouettes), and the Later Stone Age (the F.D.R. Memorials were basically a new Stonehenge).

"We perceive a band of itinerants ambling along the road to Rome. They have hair to their shoulders or sticking out in mops, covering their faces with beads, trailing moustaches and sideburns. They have tinkling bells and beads and face-paint like Indians, and bare feet or sandals, and costumes made of odds and ends, the relics of defunct armies and social orders. They are barbarians, rude and confused, en route to Rome. The barbarians of yore wanted to be Romans; ours—you can tell the difference by the jeans—are going in the hope of finding jobs in the movies or of hustling a few tourists. We pass them all by, and hurry on to the Eternal City.

"We enter a city of public life and visual glory, its concomitant. There is the Saturnian Hill, the Capitol, where Jupiter Optimus Maximus brings heaven to earth in a golden temple. There is the Palatine, the official residence of the Emperors, a vast congeries of magnificent buildings standing on a hill. Here is the heart of Rome, the Forum. Here are the basilicas, royal in their magnificence (the word 'basilica' comes from the Greek for 'king'). They are the most important buildings in the city for they are the courts of law, the principal element of Rome's superiority and power.

"Equally magnificent are the temples of the Roman gods, the deified representatives of the Roman genius which presides over the destinies of the State.

"These monumental buildings adorned with the statues of generals, lawyers and priests, with sculpted triumphs and symbols of authority, are public places, the houses of the city's institutions, a testimony to the imperious energies of its citizens. They also testify to another aspect of Rome's genius, namely, assimilation. Its fruits are before us: arches from the Etruscans, art forms from Greece, the majesty and opulence of Asia, the ponderous immensity of Egypt: all are Roman.

"Wearied by all this grandeur, power and authority, let us betake ourselves to one of the great imperial public baths. There are a number of these to choose from, and they are among the most luxurious buildings ever built. Will it be Titus or Caracalla or Domitian? The great hall of Pennsylvania Station of glorious memory offers us only a faint reflection of these structures because it had no color. The baths in Rome are adorned with columns, pavings and walls of serpentine from Thebes, light green scrawled with purple veins. Here too is Egyptian porphyry, a very dark reddish purple crowded with small pinkish spots, and *giallo antico* from Numidia, pale yellow flushed with deeper yellow and finely streaked with purple. There is gilt bronze, mosaics of lapis lazuli set with malachite and gold, statues from the studios of Grecian masters, and a thousand other beauties and wonders set in rooms of every size, shape and temperature.

"Water spills from the lips of monolithic basins. Bathers frolic in tubs hewn from a single piece of Egyptian granite. (Two of these stand today before the Farnese Palace.) Mighty cascades leap from wall fountains: water gushes from the lips of sculptured masks and jets from the bills of gilt bronze swans.

Giant pools reflect the walls and ceilings, bathing them in a shimmer of light such as you may have noticed in Venetian rooms or in some moated French château. There are gardens, gymnasia, libraries and galleries. Refreshed after bathing, we stroll amongst them.

"You are the heirs of all this; you are the heirs of Rome. This is your civilization. This is what theology, and philosophy and law have accomplished, and the world is not going to be reinvented.

"From all sides we hear that glory is no longer wanted in the world. This is true for the modern world of gnostic subjectivism but Classicism instills a desire for glory because it loves man and nature. And loving them, it attempts to give them their greatest beauty.

"In Classicism, the human figure is not an *objet d'art*; it is an illustration of moral truths. For Classicism, the style of glory, the paradigm of glory is man, and the paradigm of art is the human form. The great resources of Classical architecture—the subtle columns, the others and their modes which run the gamut of every architectural character, the arches and vaults, the definitions of scale, the domes, the decorations, the clear symmetries of plan and elevation—all are at the service of painting and sculpture in their representation of man and nature. The secret of the Grand Manner is simplicity, a simplicity which lies on the far side of hercynian complexity. It is the simplicity of cosmos as opposed to chaos.

"Someone will surely object that I have talked a lot about glory, whereas few of us feel or expect to feel glorious. Aren't buildings which exhale glory merely false fronts? Or, to put it another way, doesn't Classicism attempt a lifestyle that is beyond today's emotional and intellectual means?

"My answer is that outward, visible signs often precede inward and invisible graces. Once you adopt Classicism you may feel rather out of things, and rightly so. You will have to abandon the Establishment of which you are very much a part. The grants and publicity will no longer come your way. Those who cultivate the acanthus will be true revolutionaries, and nothing is more bleak than being ahead of one's time.

"Say that someone wanted to take up Classicism: how would he begin?" "There are and will be people who arrive at Classicism via philosophy and theology or via the law and the plight of our cities, but most of us have been, and will be brought to Classicism by our admiration for the monuments of Imperial Rome, and the various ages and places

that attempted to bring them to second life."

"But that's living in the past. We have an exciting new architecture today which expresses our times."

"It's true that we have a foot in the past. Classical architecture always harks back to some Golden Age, but the backward glance transforms. Every new generation sees something new in the past. And emphases shift. The American Renaissance looked to Antiquity and the High Renaissance, whereas today we look to Imperial Rome and, for the first time in history, to the Baroque and Rococo. But the moment Classical loses sight of a Golden Age it is doomed to failure. Look at Washington, where the Grand Manner of Arthur Brown, Jr. gave way to the rather Brooks Brothers niceties of Delano and Aldrich."

"Isn't what you want just Beaux Arts?"

"The Beaux Arts was always a rationalist school, its only truly classical graduates were the Americans, and that was fifty years ago."

"There isn't a school of architecture or art in the world today that teaches Classicism. The more obscure and provincial they are, the more they try for shock publicity by waving the banner of avant-gardism. As Louis Jouvet once said, 'Everything changes but the *'avant-garde.'*'"

"It will have to go to 'the people.' The term shouldn't conjure up visions of Mother Russia, Kathe Kollwitz or the crowds in cloth caps in René Clair's *"A Nous la Liberté."* Thanks to the American system the proletariat has been abolished: we are all 'the people.'"

Our talk continued along the same lines. Most of the young people probably found my point of view quaint, if not downright ridiculous. But then, as I reflected later, so would I have at their age, when Le Corbusier was my god. It may be that the torch of Classicism was passed without our knowing it.

Those of us who have already seen its light must all dream and talk Classicism. If a new A-frame design is proposed for your church, combat it. Say: "I don't think we want this Melanesian prayer hut. What you call a 'devotional atmosphere' just looks dark and spooky to me. Let's have a church where the greatest mysteries can be performed out in the open amid Classical surroundings." Then distribute copies of *Classical America* which delineates the merits of Classical surroundings. If you encounter ideological opposition and questions that are hard to answer, write to *Classical America*.

If you are a parent, say: "I don't want my

children to be staring at that abstract mosaic. I'd rather have a statue of an American hero or patriot." If you are a banker, say: "I don't want to slave my life away under an eight-foot luminous ceiling. Give me a room that was meant for people." If you are in state politics, say: "I don't want that new county seat: it could be a department store. Give us something with a dome." If you are a judge, say: "The majesty of the law demands a Classical setting." If you are a hostess, tell your decorator: "Now don't give me one of those rooms which is all window display. I want an architectural interior, a Classical interior." If you belong to a union, be sure to tell the building committee that you don't want your dues wasted on structural dialectics and other nonsense, and that you know where you can get a speaker to address your fellow union members. If you are a sculptor, painter or architect who dreams of Classicism but never knew that others do too, write to us; you are not alone.

If you are a teacher in an art school, we will send *Classical America* to you in a plain envelope. Your apostasy of Modernism would never be forgiven by your department chairman or your students, who are so eager to "make it."

"But why, you ask, should we want to emulate buildings which were built by hand and out of stone. Modern building techniques are much better, and modern architecture derives from them. Yes, material progress is a great fact. We can use a bulldozer to dig a lake where Louis XIV needed 30,000 Swiss. In the past, an enormous amount of energy went into covering large interior spaces. Steel and concrete have eliminated such problems, but new ones have sprung up in their place. In modern architecture, all forms must have a structural origin. Having columns and beams and cantilevers or concrete-from-the-forms right up front, as in the Guggenheim or the Seagram Building, allows no leeway for inexactitude, and this is expensive. Worse, instead of structural common sense we have structural dialectics, a perversion of structural progress. If structure is to be expressed it had best be 'exciting' which introduces the factor of irrationality or science fiction. Buildings must look as if they were suspended in space, or they must be high narrow slabs (windage problems) or take on any number of monstrous or quaint form in what is strictly a minuet of elephants."

"I saw some of the drawings that were at your shows. Where would you get the workmen to do that kind of thing today?"

"I don't worry about getting people to do

things. Workmen with transistor radios blaring from their hip-pockets are at this moment carving Corinthian capitals to rebuild The Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco.

"What really worries me is the problem of artists and architects. If you set out to represent the human form your product can be immediately compared with the real thing, and with the work of the Old Masters. I know several artists who have tried to do Old Master paintings; the results sent them back to Modernism, sadder, wiser and poorer. The same is true for architects. Old buildings cannot be copied directly. They never fit current requirements or coincide exactly with the architect's particular bias. Nor is he on the spot, say in Vicenza, to take the measurements that would permit him to make a counterfeite (which, incidentally, would be a very good idea since it would teach everyone something about scale).

Architects have to become fluent in the Classical idiom, something which is possible only in conjunction with an actual client. Designs done in a vacuum always drift off into personal obsessions and fantasies. A client will soon discover to his dismay that things are going very slowly, and that the architect can't go any faster because he is learning. In the meantime he will be making a great deal less than a living wage. We have the greatest material progress in the world; we have the best manufacturers, workshops and workmen, but there's nobody in the front office."

"If the picture is as gloomy as all that, how will Classicism ever get into orbit?"

Classicism was once the mistress of nations, including our own. She has fallen to the lowest depths of desuetude, and her grass-roots champions must face the fact that they will lose both money and friends in her defense. We do have one invincible ally: time. The Modern Movement can't last forever.

Our nation enjoys the greatest material progress ever known; in this we are the heirs of Rome. Once the profound humanism of Rome is joined to our technical advances the result will be a state of affairs where the Modern Movement will look like something from the Dark Ages. Any return to it would be an unthinkable regression. The Modern Movement doesn't fit the United States. This is but dimly perceptible as yet. Nevertheless, I am convinced that we are in the process of casting off the shackles of our misguided Modernism, to create what will truly be a Classical America.

JOHN BARRINGTON BAYLEY

Without Even a Whimper

Malraux, the École des Beaux Arts and the Prix de Rome

It had to come. Besides, the architectural ateliers of the Beaux Arts have long since gone Modern.

Early in December, 1968, André Malraux as Minister of Cultural Affairs took architecture out of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts. From now on architecture in France will be taught in five autonomous units in Paris and in thirteen throughout the provinces. Depending on the faculty, the emphasis will be on city planning, creative architecture, structural research, some sociology, and other subjects that are fashionable in American architectural schools.

At the same time the Minister withdrew government sponsorship of the Prix de Rome. If it so desires, the *Institut de France* (owner of the Villa Medici that houses the French Academy in Rome) can continue to offer the prize, but there will be no financial assistance from the government.

"Rome," Malraux explained, "has nothing basic to teach architects. We should replace the Prix de Rome with traveling fellowships to the countries where Modern architecture is being created—Finland, the United States, Brazil, and perhaps Japan."

The change has not satisfied all students. A dissident group is demanding that architectural education be integrated with the university system, by taking it out of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and placing it under the Ministry of Education. The dissidents believe that, at present, professional instruction is too narrow. They believe it should be attuned to the main currents of present-day thought and to the newer behavioral sciences: sociology, psychology, and even modern economics.

Classical Underground

One of the curious aspects of contemporary America, and the Western World for that matter, is the near unanimity of the editorial minds on the sacred law: "Be Modern." Editorial policy, whatever the vehicle, has but one allegiance in the arts, namely *Modernism*. This statement of faith is often accompanied by attacks on conformity.

Even so-called "Underground Art" fits safely into the convention; the preoccupation with sex, nihilism and obscenity has only increased as the century advances. "underground art" owes its success to the false daring which strictly adheres to current fashion; those who thrill to it sense that it obeys an approved canon.

Strange as it may seem, the true underground in the arts is the Classical tradition. It is radical in that it does not conform to the Modernistic. And editors wholly disregard it. Only by accident do we learn in the press of the popularity of the Classical, or come upon rare pleas for it in an article or a book which questions contemporary nihilism.

Below are a few examples, the revelation of a Classical underground, a radical current in the sea of Modernism's hegemony. Often the reference is in terms of the "traditional," a term that unconsciously stands for the Classical tradition.

Classical America invites the reader to contribute items. Whenever possible all submissions should bear the author's name, the source, and the date.

ABOUT THE HOUSE

The vacuity of contemporary design may explain why so many forward-looking people, who would normally buy modern furniture, are not doing so today, and why some of today's most interesting and up-to-date looking apartments have nothing in them made after 1900 but are furnished with a mixture of past styles. This so-called eclecticism doesn't always produce the effect it should—it can be precious and false—but properly conceived, it can result in rooms of considerable beauty, individual, and comfort. . . .

("On and Off the Avenue," *The New Yorker*, April 6, 1968.)

MUST CITIES GIVE WAY TO GLASS BOXES?

San Francisco. Even when the new buildings are relatively small, they come looking—so the old joke goes—like the box the last one came in.

"One of the great beauties of the modern buildings (in the early days) was that you saw the reflection of older buildings in the glass walls," but when the glass walls start reflecting other glass walls, "people get sick of it," contends Joseph Esherick, a San Francisco architect.

Can San Francisco be rescued from such a fate?

(John F. Lawrence, *The Wall Street Journal*, June 21, 1967.)

ART-HUNTING COPS GETTING THE HANG OF IT

Detectives are checking out all sanitation workers and private garbage removal companies who may have been in the area last weekend when \$250,000 worth of contemporary paintings were stolen.

"Most of it looks like trash," Sergeant Brent said.

"It's conceivable that someone might have dumped it."

(Mike Pearl, *The New York Post*, November 11, 1967).

"I admire the self-satisfaction with which those who, knowing nothing of the past, flatter themselves that they have left it behind. They rush ceaselessly ahead like the sheep of Panurge that nothing stopped on the road of progress. The true revolutionary, on the contrary, is the person who sticks firmly to a truth, no matter its age, when all the world abandons it. . . ."

(*Les tribulations de Sophie* by Etienne Gilson, cited by Pierre-Henri Simon in *Le Monde*, September 23, 1968.)

THE HOME: ROOM FOR EVERY TASTE

At the moment, the most popular style of furniture, at least in the mass market, is Early American. . . .

("Modern Living," *Time*, February 9, 1968.)

"I cannot let go the conviction that there will be one day, that indeed there *must* be, a Renaissance. (The art world is now too crackpot to endure for long.) The day of its coming would be hastened if only influential laymen, not artists like me, would say frankly what they think. But they won't because they are too timid."

(*High Relief* by Sir Charles Wheeler, cited by Peter Grosvenor in "New Books," *The Daily Express*, London, May 23, 1968.)

'NEW TOWN' TRIALS: A PLANNING COMMUNITY IN VIRGINIA IS FORCED TO CHANGE ITS DIRECTION

Reston, Va. The modern row-style town house now prevalent here has not attracted buyers in droves. Hence, traditional architecture will make a comeback at Reston. . . .

(*The Wall Street Journal*, October 13, 1967.)

A Painted Room

The rare murals which are painted today almost always tend to decorative landscapes and architectural detail. In the "Grotto," the small dining room of my own house, I am attempting a painted room with more elaborate subject matter, a *schema* in the sense applicable to decorated rooms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where a complex iconography was intended to interact and amuse on several levels.

The house itself, located on Stuyvesant Street in the St. Mark's Historic District, is a New York town house of the 1850's. It has several good rooms of the period, but the Grotto itself is a small attic room of no architectural distinction, with a low ceiling that follows the pitch of the roof. The room does have a certain haphazard charm of proportion and two attic windows with window-seats, but the only feature is a rough blind arch in the real wall. Formal decoration in any traditional style would therefore seem difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

The library, the most important room in the house, has been designed in the "gothick" manner with painted *canaïeux* of the Muses and the Olympian deities. The Classical mythological reference used in this and other rooms made it seem appropriate to dedicate the Grotto to the Chthonian deities, the gods of the underworld. Functionally, the room is a dining room and in the ancient mystery religions these deities were associated not only with death but with rebirth, food, agriculture, and the changing seasons.

With these themes as the basis of the *schema*, the room is being painted in *trompe l'oeil* as if constructed of stone fragments of various periods assembled in new and sometimes bizarre combinations. Roman sarcophagi are used as windowseats; Baroque masks become door pediments; Atlantes strain and groan in cramped niches; battered fragments of sculpture and architecture are assembled to form new figures ("oracles") of quasi-human shape, with the emphasis on old parts becoming new and functioning entities. On either side of a boarded-up *trompe l'oeil* window painted within the actual

arch, are the presiding figures of Demeter and Persephone.

Against this illusionistic stone, stucco and crumbling brickwork are painted *trompe l'oeil* objects, pictures and scraps that carry a network of personal reference. When the painting is completed these references will supplement and close the scheme of decoration in the other rooms of the house.

Such a room, of course, runs the risk of seeming both aggressively arch and ponderously oppressive. It is intended, if possible, to avoid both and create an atmosphere that combines a Roman restaurant, a Tunnel of Love or Ghost Railway at a fun-fair, and an underworld whose seriousness lies between, say, that of Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Offenbach's *Orpheus in Hades*.

HIGHT MOORE

Entrance door with grotesque pediment and rustication. Flanking the door are painted fantastic figures composed of "stone" fragments of various periods reset in a stucco wall.





A view of the rear wall in the Grotto showing the "window" flanked by relief sculptures of Demeter and Persephone and two monumental Atlantes. Except for the actual blind arch, all the wall decoration is painted on the flat wall surface. The room is painted darker toward the floor.

On the wall opposite the entrance door is a painted replica of the door, with a weakened keystone, blocked up by crumbling brick and stone. It, too, is flanked by fantastic figures.





One of the Atlantes and a part of the closet door (painted to imitate weathered wood), upon which is "pinned" a capriccio of the actual house, as it would appear on a Venetian canal with gondola and gondolier.



Detail of the painted window and relief of Persephone with trompe l'oeil objects.

The library, designed in a Regency "gothick" manner, generalized to allow latitude in furnishings and to be compatible with the nineteenth century Anglo-Italianate house. The folding door panels are decorated with camaïeux representing eight of the Muses, while the overdoor panel shows the ninth Muse with Apollo and the poet.





The nine doors below the bookcases have similar mythological representations of the sun, moon, and planets with the twelve months.

Detail of large porcelain chimera shown against painted decoration on the wall of a small sitting room. The chimera is an early nineteenth century exercise in the Rococo manner, produced at the Volkstedt factory.



The Vision Spurned

Classical-New York

The Story of City Planning in New York

New Yorkers have not, in the passage of time, shied away from city planning so much as accepted it only when forced to do so. They have treated the visionary with indifference; moreover, the rare visions to appear have been vaporous. No New York artist has stepped forward with an idealistic setting on canvas in the way that Raphael, in a Vatican fresco, has the ancient philosophers assembled in a vast building with a court, coffered vaulting and sculpture. Veronese places Christ at the marriage feast in a Cana of terraces, colonnades and statues. Thomas Cole, on the other hand, builds a city on one small canvas in his series, "The Course of Empire," only to destroy it in the next. The founder of the Hudson River School was very much of a child of the Romantic Era in his fear of cities.

Nor was the New Yorker tempted to indulge in two-dimensional schemes, paper inventions showing circles, squares, octagons and avenues. That

may have been all very well, let us say, for eighteenth-century France, as seen in Pierre Patte's *Monuments érigés en France à la gloire de Louis XV*, but not for the men of Gotham.

Yet it may be asked: was a vision needed to build the towers of lower Manhattan? Overlooking the Narrows from the bluff of Von Briesen Park in Staten Island, the practical New Yorker can point to the greatest urban spectacle of modern times across the Upper Bay. He attained *that* without a vision. Perhaps it would be simplest just to tell the story of planning in New York—what has taken place—to see the influence, if any, it has had on the metropolis.

I think it is fair to begin the story with Inigo Jones, one of England's great architects. This is the same Inigo Jones whose elaborate masques delighted Charles I, much to the annoyance of Ben Jonson; the script-writer had been pushed aside by

Two pictures from the series of Thomas Cole entitled "The Course of Empire." The city is shown triumphant in one and, in the other, being destroyed. It is the apotheosis of the Romantic vision of the city.



Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society, New York City.

the set designer. "O Showes! Showes! Mighty Showes!" mocked the envious playwright:

The Eloquences of Masques! What need of
prose

Or Verse, or Sense t'express Immortal you?

You are the Spectacles of State!

In 1620 the Dutch authorities asked Jones to draw plans for a fort at the tip of Manhattan. Nothing came of the commission; an engineer, Kryn Fredericks, got the job and built Fort Amsterdam in 1626.

Jones's fort would not have lasted had it been built, any more than any building lasts in the city. At least the mention of his name has a lesson for us: what counts in a city plan is seen from the ground, the third dimension is too often absent in attempts at urban design.

Today's planners have forgotten that element, judging from the extensive use made of aerial photographs. Fascinating as they often are, they have only secondary value to planning. A book on city planning illustrated with air views is valueless, an admission that the author refuses to look at things from the ground. Planning, even when it extends to traffic, sewage, industrial sites and housing projects, is as important as plumbing, insulation and the framing of a house; but, like a house, the test for most of us in the elevation, what rises from the ground. We may be astonished to learn that the ancient Romans had plumbing, but it is not our interest in that most practical side of living which prods us to make the pilgrimage to temples, to triumphal arches, to ruins of once-sumptuous baths. We seek out the permanent stage sets which time has passed along. Leon Battista Alberti, architect and humanist of fifteenth century Italy, once wrote of architecture, and it is no less true of city planning, that: "when we lift up our eyes to heaven and view the wonderful works of God, we admire Him more for the beauties we see than for the convenience we feel and derive from them." The honors go to Inigo Jones, the set designer, not to the inventor of the water-closet whomever he may have been.

The New Amsterdam that was not to know the work of Jones, was Gothic, with the winding streets still to be seen south of City Hall. Their irregularity was in part dictated by the nature of the site; lower Broadway, for example, runs along a ridge. The Dutch brought over one device popular in their

nation: the canal. One ran up Broad Street as far as Exchange Place and was kept "at all times full of water, so that in time of need because of fire . . . it might be used." In architecture their permanent contribution was the stoop.

The future city numbered 1,500 souls when it became New York in 1664. Change proved slow; only with the rise of Sir Christopher Wren over London did the Renaissance gain a hold in New York, a hold it was not to lose until our own time. Church steeples and cupolas punctuating the low horizon were the new feature. The center of the colonial government was Fort George on the site of the old Dutch fort; here were the governor's residence, the seat of the colonial council and assembly, and quarters for the garrison. It was in front of the fort that, in 1733, a small piece of land was leased as a bowling green, the city's first park. Municipal government was at the City Hall on the northwest corner of what are now Wall and Nassau Streets. The Common, which we identify primarily with New England towns, covered roughly the area of the present City Hall Park. At one time the property of the Dutch West Indian Company, it had been turned over to the municipality for public executions and the city jail. As for civic monuments there was one, an equestrian statue of George III in gilt lead, placed in Bowling Green in 1770, the first example of the invasion of park land by monuments.

The Renaissance made itself felt in planning only when the city expanded after the mid-century. Around 1760 Trinity Parish developed its property north of the church between Broadway and the Hudson. Francis Maerschallck, city surveyor, did the planning. At the center of the scheme, which reached as far north as Chambers Street, a small square was set aside for King's College, the future Columbia University.

The most ambitious project of English New York was Maerschallck's plan for the Bowery estate of Chief Justice James De Lancey. The De Lanceys were the Rockefellers of eighteenth-century New York, only more powerful. A large family, intermarried with other key families, they stood at the head of the "De Lancey Interest" representing the city merchants against upstate landlords. While their money had stemmed from trade, they owned much city property. (A daughter of the house was the wife of Vice-Admiral Sir Peter Warren, owner of "Greenwich," a 300-acre property which covered much of what is now Greenwich Village.)

The Bowery estate ran between the Bowery

and the East River and north from Division Street to the approximate location of Stanton Street. In the middle of a grid plan Maerschalc put Delancey's Square, a large residential square covering the eight blocks bounded by Hester, Broome, Eldridge and Essex Streets. This was the first scheme of its kind for the city, although long after Inigo Jones's Covent Garden (1635), London's first residential square, and William Penn's plan for Philadelphia (1682) which included five such squares. Unfortunately nothing came of Delancey's Square; only the family name survived in Delancey Street. The explanation for the loss is simple enough: the De Lanceys were Tory to a man and all their property in the state was confiscated under the Act of Attainder of 1779. (Sir Peter Warren's heirs did not suffer any loss, probably because he had been, in his day, New York's great hero.) The municipality took over the square. In the 1790's it was divided into land parcels and auctioned off; some of the lots went to James Roosevelt, a direct ancestor of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Gone was the promise

of what would have been the principal adornment of the Lower East Side.

Worse yet, the loss showed the trend in planning. The merchants who succeeded the De Lanceys may have been politically radical but they were more hidebound than the Tories when it came to setting aside land for public use. Their city was to be carved up for exploitation.

The first post-Revolutionary plan confirmed the direction. The Mangin-Goerck Plan of 1799 covered an extension of the East River waterfront from a point near the Battery northeast to Corlear's Hook. What saved the plan from being a wholly speculative instrument—for it was a grid—was Mangin's suggestion to set aside the junctures of the old and new streets for fountains and statues. This modest invitation to civic design was forgotten, however, when the plan was executed.

The Mangin of the plan was Joseph-François Mangin, co-architect of the City Hall. His name still marks a short street at Baruch Houses near Corlear's Hook although Casimir Goerck's name has given

An enlarged section of the Ratzer Map, published in 1776 but based on surveys made in 1766 and 1767. De Lancey Square is seen east of the Bowery and north

of Division Street. (Division Street was the division between the James De Lancey estate and the Rutgers property to the south.)



There is a familiar ring to this, as in our own time when "necessity" is offered to explain away mediocrity.

In explaining why they had limited themselves to rectilinear and rectangular streets or "whether they should adopt a grid in preference to some of those supposed improvements, by circles, ovals and stars, which certainly embellish a plan, whatever their effects as to convenience and utility" the planners stated that "they could not bear in mind that a city is to be composed of the habitations of men, and that strait [*sic*] sided and right angled houses are the most cheap to build, and the most convenient to live in. The effect of these plain and simple reflections was decisive." And they concluded on a defensive note: "If it should be asked, why was the present plan adopted in preference to any other, the answer is, because after taking all circumstances into consideration, it appeared to be the best; or, in other and more proper terms, attended with the least inconvenience."

Major L'Enfant, the planner of Washington, was of a different opinion. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, he wrote: "Such regular plans indeed, however answerable they may be on paper or seducing as they may be in the first aspect to the eyes . . . must when applied upon ground . . . become at last tiresome and insipid . . ." This type of planning can ". . . never be but a mean continuance of some cool imagination, wanting a sense of the really grand and truly beautiful [which is] only to be met with where nature contributes with art and diversifies with objects." The three commissioners had shown utter disregard for nature, putting down their grid on cliff, dale, stream bed and shoreline with equal indifference. Nor were they going to allow another generation the opportunity to take advantage of a scheme "really grand and truly beautiful."

The north-south avenues were fixed at 100-foot widths, with cross streets measuring 60 feet in width spaced at 200-foot intervals. The east-west dimension of the blocks ranged from 610 feet to 920 feet. The explanation for these differences is to be found in several surveys of common lands made by Casimir Goerck in 1785 and 1796. The latter one had divided the city-owned property running along the north-south spine of the island, from 23rd to 93rd Streets, into 920-foot widths between what are now Fifth and Sixth Avenues, thus making the widest blocks on Manhattan.

(At 57th Street the block widths are as follows: 613 feet from Sutton Place to First Avenue, 650 feet from First to Second, 610 feet from Second

to Third, 420 feet from Third to Lexington, 405 feet from Lexington to Park, 400 feet from Park to Madison, 420 feet from Madison to Fifth, 920 feet from Fifth to Sixth, 800 feet from Sixth to Seventh, 800 feet from Seventh to Eighth including Broadway, which was not on the plan at this point, and 800 for the blocks continuing to Twelfth Avenue. Poor surveying accounted for the small differences on the East Side while the large disparities were due to the cutting through of Madison and Lexington Avenues in the 1830's.)

If the Commissioners rejected L'Enfant's example and the models he had emulated in his plan for Washington, they might nevertheless have provided for a quantity of residential squares in the manner of London. They might have, but they did not. "It may, to many, be a matter of surprise, that so few vacant spaces have been left, and those so small, for the benefit of fresh air, and consequent preservation of health," runs their extraordinary comment. "Certainly, if the City of New York were destined to stand on the side of a small stream, such as the Seine or the Thames, a great number of ample places might be needful; but those large arms of the sea which embrace Manhattan Island, render its situation, in regard to health and pleasure, as well as to convenience of commerce, peculiarly felicitous; when, therefore, from the same causes, the price of land is so uncommonly great, it seemed proper to admit the principles of economy to greater influence than might, under circumstances of a different kind, have consisted with the dictates of prudence and the sense of duty."

With this apology—and the admission that they "had provided space for a greater population than is collected at any spot on this side of China"—they allotted some 500 acres for "vacant spaces." "Market Place" was bounded by 7th and 10th Streets, First Avenue and the East River, "Union Place" from 10th to 16th Streets between Broadway and Park Avenue South, "The Parade" from 23rd to 34th Streets and from Third to Seventh Avenues, and "Bloomingdale Square" from 53rd to 57th Street and from Eighth to Ninth Avenues. Other parks included "Hamilton Square" (bounded by 66th and 68th Streets, Third Avenue and Fifth Avenue), "Manhattan Square" running from 77th to 81st Street and from Central Park West to Columbus Avenue, "Observatory Place" or "Square for Reservoir" from 89th to 94th Streets and from Park to Fifth Avenues, "Haerlem Marsh" from 106th to 109th Street and from Fifth Avenue to the East River, and "Haerlem Square" from 117th to 125th

Streets between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. Bloom-
ingdale Square, Observatory Place, Haerlem Marsh
and Haerlem Square got no further than the paper
stage. In the case of one, Hamilton Square, the land
was turned over to several public and semi-public
institutions which explains the presence of Hunter
College and the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park
Avenue. The Market Place was cut down in size
to become Tompkins Square in 1833; the same was
true of Union Place, today's Union Square, which
was reduced to its present size in 1831. The Parade,
originally 73½ acres, was cut down to 6¼ acres
by 1844 and given the name of Madison Square.
Instead of 500 acres as prescribed by the Commis-
sioners there resulted a mere 38 acres. (It should
be noted that Manhattan Square, now Theodore
Roosevelt Park, has largely been taken by the Ameri-
can Museum of Natural History.)

John Randel, Jr., who had done the surveying
for the Commission, innocently revealed the true
nature of the plan when, in defending it, he wrote
that its chief virtue was its usefulness for "buying,
selling and improving real estate." The final word
can be left to Edith Wharton who, on looking back
upon her birthplace, declared the product "naïf,"
the work of "a society of prosperous businessmen
who have no desire to row against the current."

Not all New Yorkers were quite so "naïf," nor
so wanting in a high sense of purpose. A few of the
prosperous did aim for something beyond the grid
so useful to speculators. Among these were the trus-
tees of the Corporation of Trinity Parish, the city's
largest landowner around 1800. They commissioned
John McComb, Jr., who shared with Mangin the
honor of designing City Hall, and his brother Isaac
to develop the Parish land adjoining the Hudson
just south of Canal Street. The McCombs plan con-
sisted of a residential square bounded by Beach,
Hudson, Laight and Varick Streets; moreover, it
went beyond mere planning to achieve true civic de-
sign. In the first place, Hudson Square served as
the setting for St. John's Chapel which John Mc-
Comb completed in 1804. Second, they established
specifications for the residences that were to be
built on the square. The houses had to be three
stories high, of brick construction and of uniform
appearance. The first two were to be twelve feet
high, the top one nine. The consequence was a
pleasing unity both in dimension and style as seldom
has been achieved in the city's history. With the
chapel's high columned porch and steeple as focus,
the square also had the advantage of good planting
surrounded by a fine wrought-iron fence, this last

a reminder that the park was private, open only
to householders on the square.

"Hudson Square and its neighborhood is, I
believe, the most fashionable part of town. The
square is beautiful, exceedingly well planted with
a great variety of trees, and only wanting our fre-
quent and careful mowing to make it equal to any
square in London," wrote Mrs. Trollope in 1831.
The observation is high praise indeed, since our
English visitor was better known for her acid com-
ments on other parts of the country. "The iron rail-
ing which surrounds this enclosure is as high and as
handsome as that of the Tuileries, and it will give
some idea of the care bestowed on its decoration,
to know that the gravel for the walks was conveyed
by barges from Boston, not as ballast, but as freight."
It was in Hudson Square that the Effingham family
in James Fenimore Cooper's *Home As Found*,
generally accepted as America's first novel of man-
ners, paused after their stay abroad. Cooper himself
had, in 1823 and 1824, lived just off the square
when at work on *The Pilot*. A later description, in
1847, refers to the area as "St. John's Park," and
speaks of it as "this enchanted spot, by far the most
beautiful of our city parks . . . a spot of Eden love-
liness."

Fashion could no longer stop in this part of
Manhattan after the Hudson River Railroad laid
tracks along Hudson Street on the square's west
side. Besides, fashion was moving uptown. In 1866
Trinity Parish and the house owners sold the park
proper to Commodore Vanderbilt for \$1,000,000;
three years later he filled the "spot of Eden love-
liness" with the big St. John's Park Freight Terminal.
The houses went one by one, the chapel in 1918.
In 1936 the terminal disappeared. The bronze statue
of the frock-coated Commodore, which once held the
center of an immense copper relief in the terminal's
pediment, was moved to the ramp in front of the
facade of Grand Central Terminal where it still
stands to surprise drivers maneuvering their cars
around the bend. The final blow came recently when
the empty square gave way to an approach to the
Holland Tunnel, thanks to the omniverous Port of
New York Authority. So much for New York's
most successful residential square.

Private initiative was likewise responsible for
the establishment of three surviving oases. Gramercy
Park, Union Square and Stuyvesant Square. Samuel
Bulkley Ruggles, a prosperous businessman, bought
what had been a farm and set aside 420 lots, 520
by 184 feet in all, to form Gramercy Park in the
center of his development. (The word, Gramercy,

An enlargement of the Trinity Parish development showing Hudson Square or St. John's Park as originally laid out by Isaac and John McComb, Jr. When developed, the square was reduced by one block on the south, to extend only as far as Beach Street. The enlargement was made from the Mangin-Goerck—map of 1803.



A photograph (1866-1867) looking west on Beach Street from the corner of Varick. To the right is St. John's Park and to the left the handsome row houses built to the specifications of Trinity Parish. The park disappeared in 1867 with the construction of the St. John's Park Freight Terminal by Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt.



is presumed to be the corruption of the Dutch, "*Krom Moraesje*," which means "little crooked stream.") Although he did not go so far as the Trinity trustees in the matter of building restrictions, he did forbid commercial structures and insisted on "brick or stone dwelling houses of at least three stories in height on the periphery. Like Hudson Square, Gramercy Park was designed as a private park and has remained one to this day.

Ruggles also was instrumental in shaping Union Square, which he rescued from the fate that befell most of the squares in the 1811 Plan. "Come what will," he told a friend in 1831, as they walked through it, "our open squares will remain forever imperishable. Buildings, towers, palaces may mould and crumble beneath the touch of time; but space—free, glorious, open space—will remain to bless the city." "And do you not perceive the reason?" Came the reply, "Man makes buildings but God makes space."

The same cheerful optimism must have moved Peter Gerard Stuyvesant, direct descendant of "Peg-leg Peter," when he developed part of the family estate on both sides of Second Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets. He could have divided the land into lots; instead, in 1847, he set aside the square which bears his name.

An odd source of open space was the potters field. The pauper's last resting place was in municipal land, which was the chief reason why it remained public in the form of a city square. (Manhattan cemeteries, being privately held, were sold, for the most part by their trustees and replaced by others away from the city's center or even out in the country. The vast Calvary Cemetery in the Borough of Queens first occupied most of a block on the Lower East Side.) Union Square served briefly as a potters field; so too did a portion of Madison Square, which explains why these two Commissioners' squares have come down to us. Washington Square, not on the Commissioners' Plan, would never have come into existence had it not been a potters field from 1799 to 1825, before becoming a parade ground. Bryant Park was another pauper's burial ground from 1823 to around 1840 when its eastern half, the site of the New York Public Library, was taken for the Distributing Reservoir of the Croton Aqueduct.

(This reservoir was one of the city's most impressive sights. "When you visit Gotham, you should ride out the Fifth Avenue, as far as the distributing reservoir," Edgar Allen Poe urged in 1844. "The prospect from the walk around the reservoir is par-

ticularly beautiful. You can see, from this elevation, the north reservoir at Yorkville [which, until 1929, occupied the site of Central Park's Great Lawn behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art], the whole city to the Battery, with a large portion of the harbor, and long reaches of the Hudson and East Rivers.")

New York's flirtation with the residential square was casual at best, despite the ever-present Anglomania. Not one came into existence after Stuyvesant Square. The conservative merchants, as Edith Wharton pointed out, did not want them any more than they wanted other embellishments. The Astors, who succeeded the De Lanceys as the dominant New York family, may have initiated the city's tradition of the luxury hotel with the Astor House, completed in 1836. Eleven years later they built the first public research library in the nation, the Astor Library on Lafayette Street (now the home of the New York Shakespeare Festival). The family's public spirit did not extend to open spaces, however: they never parted with a single foot of real estate for park or square. The obsession of New Yorkers, James Fenimore Cooper remarked in the 1840's, was with "*wine and money and lots*." Investment in city land had a note of respectability unknown today; a century and more ago the chief distinction between "Old New York" and "New New York" was that the latter had its money in stocks and bonds and the former in real estate.

As for civic design, there was a slight flurry in fountains after the Croton Aqueduct opened in 1842. Bowling Green obtained one which Poe declared "an absurdity, a pile of rock with the air of a small country jail in a hard thunder shower." It was lost in the Fire of 1845. He preferred the one in City Hall Park which disappeared in 1860. The city did gain a few monuments, including its finest equestrian statue, the one of Washington now inside Union Square, and the Worth Monument at Fifth Avenue and 25th Street, both erected in 1855. As to buildings, the Federal government built the Custom House, now the Federal Hall Memorial, on Wall and Nassau Streets, and the Merchants' Exchange. The latter is still standing on Wall Street, although it was enlarged to house a bank in 1907.

The list is short: New York continued to be an overblown reflection of one of England's newer provincial cities: Liverpool and Glasgow might have been the model rather than London. By 1850 the population numbered over a half million but little beyond the extent of its merchantile power and



MAP OF THE CENTRAL PARK, 1868.

Central Park in 1868, as executed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. The black line at 106th Street indicates the 1863 extension of the park. The Metropolitan Museum of Art now occupies the "Unfinished Ground" off Fifth Avenue between 79th and 85th Streets and the "Old Reservoir" has been replaced

by the Great Lawn. The "Unfinished Ground" outside the park, between 77th and 81st Streets, is the site of the American Museum of Natural History. It was the Manhattan Square of the 1811 Plan, now called Roosevelt Square.

bustle raised it above the ordinary. The first step to greatness was the laying out of a large park, namely, Central Park. Why the society of prosperous businessmen who had disdained the residential square should have created an 840-acre pleasure ground on the outskirts of the city seems incomprehensible at first glance. Yet they did so, prompted by a motivation to which we are all susceptible: fashion.

The Romantic Era had glorified nature in poetry, prose, and painting, and the project of a great urban park captured the businessmen's fancy. (The chief patron of the Hudson River School, for example, was a local wholesale grocer who lived in the city.) Then, too, the businessmen had listened to the exhortations of Andrew Jackson Downing, pomologist turned landscape architect, who urged them to adopt the English mode of picturesque or "natural scenery for their own open spaces." One merchant and large landowner, Ambrose C. Kingsland, won the mayoralty election in 1850 with the Central Park project as a key plank in his platform. Admittedly, the businessmen—August Belmont was one—tried to persuade Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux to include elaborate carriage roads and parade grounds in their design for the park, but accepted the designers' eventual rejection of their suggestions.

The park and its landscaping were to be the most important single municipal improvement in the last century, the only possible rival being Brooklyn's Prospect Park. In a dreary, monotonous New York, the park was the one effort which truly re-

flected civic pride. "The park is noticeable in one respect," wrote Junius Henri Browne, the author of *The Great Metropolis, A Mirror of New York* in 1869, who dwelt mainly on the more melancholy aspects of Manhattan; "it is the only well-governed part of the entire island."

Olmsted and Vaux did not think solely in terms of a single park nor even of individual ones scattered in and about the city; they envisioned a number of green open spaces linked by tree-lined avenues for which they invented the term "parkways." Their 1866 report on Prospect Park outlined a system of leafy drives from Coney Island to Prospect Park, thence north to Ravenswood, the approximate location of Queens Plaza today, and across the East River to Central Park, via a widened 59th Street and from Central Park to the Hudson. "Such an arrangement would enable a carriage to be driven on the half of a summer's day, through the most interesting parts of the cities of Brooklyn and New York, through their most attractive and characteristic suburbs, and through both their great parks," they wrote, "having a long stretch of the noble Hudson, with the Palisades in the middle distance and the Shawangunk range of mountains in the background, in view at one end, and the broad Atlantic with its foaming breakers rolling on the beach, at the other."

Two years later, again in a Prospect Park report, they called historical development as a witness for their sylvan drives. Streets, they argued, had at first been narrow and irregular; Sir Christopher Wren's London Plan of 1666 made them parallel

and intersecting, sixty feet in width. The third stage consisted of wide thoroughfares divided into roadway and sidewalks. After that came the boulevard, such as the 429-foot wide Avenue de l'Impératrice (now Avenue Foch) in Paris, which links the Champs-Élysées and the Bois de Boulogne. Olmsted and Vaux proposed a fifth stage: a central roadway flanked by public walks, sideroads and sidewalks, with all of these secondary elements separated by rows of trees. The walks were to have benches and panels of lawn beneath the trees. The drives would be 210 feet wide with a building line of 30 feet from the sidewalk, making a total of 270 feet from front to front. This was their "parkway." The first examples, Eastern and Ocean Parkways in Brooklyn, were begun in 1874.

This same concept was followed when the park system of The Bronx was outlined in 1884. Linking Pelham Bay Park to Bronx River Park, for example, is the Pelham and Bronx Parkway, just as Bronx River Park and Van Cortlandt Park are joined by Moshulu Parkway. The Grand Concourse, first suggested at about the same time, was to link the system to Manhattan.

Theirs was one of the rare visions in New York's city planning.

In the city proper, the big change was in the nature of the buildings. New structures like the office block, the department store and the store-cum-factory came into existence together with the new materials of the day, cast iron and plate glass. In the 1850's the large glass store window was a novelty, but it soon lined all commercial thoroughfares. A third force for change was the elevator, first installed commercially in 1857, which made it possible for buildings to expand upward. The biggest change of all, however, was caused by the importation of steel frame construction from Chi-

cago in 1889. Masonry walls were henceforth unnecessary; the city had entered the era of the skyscraper.

The difference in the city's appearance quite overwhelmed Henry Adams when he returned from London in 1867; he could not recognize the pre-Civil War New York of his youth. In that year construction began on the Brooklyn Bridge, the kind of modern artifact which Adams admired; its towers were to dominate the skyline upon its completion sixteen years later.

None of this new construction made any difference in the grid. The swelling up and out made little dent on what Edith Wharton remembered as "one of the most depressing impressions of my childhood," namely "the intolerable ugliness of New York, of its untouched streets and the narrow houses so lacking in external dignity, so crammed with smug and suffocating upholstery." Although the brownstone house has strong sentimental appeal today, it had none for Mrs. Wharton. Her unflattering description inveighed against "this low-studded rectangular New York, cursed with its universal chocolate-coloured coating of the most hideous stone ever quarried, this cramped horizontal of a town without towers, porticoes, fountains or perspectives, hide-bound in its deadly uniformity of mean ugliness." This world was the setting of her *Age of Innocence*, a world her French and English friends said was exactly "like that of the English cathedral town, or the French 'ville de province,' of the same date." It was as if New Yorkers were awaiting something fuller, something bolder—a vision to transform their city.

(To be continued)

HENRY HOPE REED

Some Remarks on the Premises of Modern Design

An Informal Talk to the Senior Class of
Hunter High School, New York City

Most of you are aware that there is great interest right now in preserving old buildings. You might think that the people whose interest in these things takes an active form would be conservative types who profess dislike for Modern buildings. Perhaps at some other time this might have been true. But it is not true today. Today this kind of conservation happens to be merely fashionable; it is the fashionable people who are interested in it. And it is not yet fashionable to deprecate Modern architecture. Thus it is perfectly all right for a critic of *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* to castigate this or that Modern building, or even the majority of Modern buildings; yet, only rarely have I heard Modern architecture called "cold," "impersonal," "shoddy" or "arbitrary"—let alone "ugly"—except by laymen or others sufficiently outside of fashion not to worry about betraying themselves. Quite the contrary. The favored image among the *cognoscenti* is "the best of the old and the best of the new"—equals, you see.

Nonetheless, I suspect that all is not as it appears. A lot of support for the preservation movement comes from people who earnestly want to save some particular building, but whose earnestness is very early seen to be only fear of what will take the old building's place if it is torn down. Or, people talk about "human scale" or "luxurious materials" or "superb craftsmanship." The wistful admission, "They'll never build like that again," comes easily to their lips and the much praised "human scale" of Classical architecture is obviously meant to contrast with the non-human scale of Modern buildings. Yet, except for a handful of mavericks, I have never heard architects say that nineteenth century architecture—or eighteenth or fifteenth, for that matter—is *better* than Modern.

One reason for this, of course, is that we are all born and bred historicists. Everybody says: "They built their way; we build ours." It thus becomes impossible to choose or, at best, turns choice into mere predilection where it is impossible rationally

to entertain the superiority of one style over another, particularly if our own style is one of them.

The other reason is that all of the terms learned by educated people for praising architecture apply mainly to Modern. The best nineteenth century buildings do not have "clean lines," "clearly expressed function," "clearly expressed structure," "honesty," or other characteristics of twentieth century stylistic ideals. Or if they do, these *desiderata* are present in ways which we have not been taught to see. To put it another way, few proponents of preservation today have any real appreciation of the buildings they are seeking to preserve.

The conclusion I have reached, and I have reason to feel quite confident of it, is that most ordinarily sophisticated people cannot express, do not even know their true feelings about contemporary building. As a matter of fact, they do have misgivings about it. This is not, yet, to say that they don't like contemporary building, but that surely there is a growing feeling that something is wrong somewhere.

The same tendency is evident among architects themselves. We see more and more apparently useless excrescences on the façades of buildings, especially towards the top. There are more and more "conceits," such as the use of corbelling where a flat sill or jamb would have been easier. We hear mutters and whispers against Mies and Gropius and the Bauhaus. What is all this?

Well, the excrescences, the playful forms, the conceits, the corbelling—these are rudimentary ornaments or, rather, halting attempts at ornaments. The muttering against the Bauhaus, the new admiration for Louis Sullivan—these are the first timid, tentative steps of rebellion against Modern building.

I myself am not much of a student of Modern architecture but I have frequent occasion to talk to many practitioners, students and practitioners. Of this at least I am sure: they too are confused. They no longer have any strong sense of what building should look like. They cannot tell you why it

should look one way rather than another.

They too are interested in old buildings—not, mind you, as architecture, but as “landmarks.” What I’m getting at is this: architects and cultivated laymen both feel that there is something wrong about Modern architecture, even though they are not quite ready to announce open revolt.

Let us leave architecture for a moment and consider the condition of our modern society in general. (By “our modern society” I don’t mean “New York” or “America” or even “Western,” so much as “mid-twentieth century, technological post-Christian.” I would not want to be understood as exempting the Socialist and Communist societies; they are based on premises fundamentally similar to those which are most current with us.) Can we fail to see that a general revolt is already under way? Of course, it has not reached anywhere near the proportions or definition which the media would have us believe; in fact, so far it is not the revolt which really interests us, but the response to it.

Here we must admit the striking fact that “the Establishment” has little to say for itself. Particular programs and policies are defended, of course, but we know that it is the “system” which is under attack, and nobody defends the system. More: the most enlightened churchmen seem to be the worst defenders of religion, capitalists the worst defenders of capitalism, teachers and scientists the worst defenders of knowledge, and so on. This is no hyperbole. I mean it literally and I believe there is a simple explanation for it. These are the people who are most committed to the defense of the infected portions of their doctrines. They, being closest to it, are the ones who feel the infection most. Churchmen cannot defend religion because they are closest to the atheism of modern doctrine; capitalists are closest to the immorality of *laissez-faire* and created demand; teachers and scientists are closest to the manifold failure of the modern notion of knowledge. The modern shibboleths and dogma are still passable currency. Their backing is suspect, but those who use them most are least free, and hence least able, to acknowledge the connection. It is finally beginning to dawn on us ordinary people, however.

I happen to be a defender of Western civilization. But I happen also to be one of those benighted types who believe it’s been going downhill for a long time. So I can admit more readily than the progressives, and with more disinterest than the attackers, that our Western civilization is very vulnerable in its present condition. Yet it is not so much in the traditional forms, which turn out to have un-

looked-for endurance, but in the Modern premises, often in conflict with those forms, that the evil lies.

A summary of these premises would go something like this: “Nature is a closed, impermeable, mechanical system, and everything that is in it. Men and human nature are in it, so our behavior is completely understandable in terms of natural, by which is to be understood ‘animal,’ drives. The so-called higher impulses are completely understandable as sublimations of the natural or lower impulses. Ultimately, the only thing which exists is material, and therefore all of history, all thought, and relations among men are determined by relations of material. Observations of the system of nature are ‘facts,’ the subject of science and the content of knowledge. The sciences provide the canon of all knowledge; science, and therefore knowledge, is not concerned with final cause. There is an inherent harmony in nature and therefore in history, and increased rationality will lead men toward it. There is no unbridgeable conflict between the individual and society; ‘paradise would be attainable right now if only we possessed the requisite knowledge. There is no unbridgeable conflict between the flesh and the spirit, no original sin. All problems yield to rational solutions and technology, and the social and political sciences will solve all problems and bring peace and plenty.”

A complex of ideas something like this still holds sway over contemporary society, but I suspect that, when stated grossly like this, it will be apparent that they are the object of increasing scepticism. This is as it should be, for their locus, to use Reinhold Niebuhr’s expression, is “a secular religion of faith in progress.” (A locus, by the way, is the line you get by joining a number of points expressing a formula.) This faith in progress has persisted although the present century may quite possibly be the most retrograde in history. More people have been murdered, killed and starved to death than ever before. Unhappiness is on the increase and, were it vouchsafed us to know, probably an unprecedented number of souls have gone to hell.

All of this is debatable, of course. What is not debatable is that the twentieth century has been the worst in history *relative to what was expected of it*. It is not merely that war has become increasingly inhuman, but that this should be so in the fact of the belief that the First World War was to be “the war to end all wars.” It is not just that people keep starving but that scientifically increased production, greater compassion, and rationalization of the means of distribution were supposed to have ended starva-

tion. It is not simply that we feel a new kind of malaise but that this crops up most virulently in that part of society which enjoys the greatest material prosperity.

We could go on. But it is hardly necessary, except to indicate briefly that the same disillusionment is felt within science itself. The physical sciences were to have provided the canon of all knowledge so that by now we would have a unified, comprehensive science. If I'm not mistaken, scientists have, with remarkable candor, altogether defined intelligibility out of their endeavor. Political and social theory was supposed to have been an established science by this time, few political or social scientists believe that any more. Even in the communist countries there is little pretense any more that Marxism-Leninism is a science. And few of us still pretend that psychology is a science.

Enough of this. It was meant only to establish sufficient ground for a serious questioning of the premises of our time; that these premises are in fact being seriously questioned we all know. But this is not to be a thirty-minute talk on the universe, and so let us return to architecture. There remain two subordinate points, and then the conclusion.

The first point is that architecture is not an isolated thing but one part of a civilization's culture. Insofar as its form depends on what people think, that is, on ideas, those ideas will tend to have as their premises the same premises as the other contemporary cultural expressions. The underlying ideas of architecture may be ahead of or behind those, say, of theology or political thought, or they may for a time develop independently. Architecture today, and for the past 150 some years, is unusually self-conscious—I mean, architects have, during that period, been talking and writing a great deal about the ideas in their art. And the premises of those ideas, I repeat, are the same as the other premises of our time.

The second point is that architects—as distinguished perhaps from architectural students—are quite conservative. Building is a conservative business: it requires constant care; it entails a high degree of personal responsibility; errors have drastic consequences; and every single operation must be translated into dollars and cents. The discipline required to master such things as steel design, plumbing and mechanical equipment weeds out all but the most exceptional radical thinkers. I know at least that, when I was studying architecture, all of us sensitive souls despised the engineering students. But those

in my class who did not manage to assimilate some of the virtues of those engineering students are not now architects. Of course in assimilating those virtues they lost certain other qualities—but that is the point. A corollary of their being conservative is that they are not in the habit (as indeed most people are not) of examining their premises.

Before concluding, let us pull together what has been said so far.

We started by describing the current state of architecture, namely, a state of confusion as to what architecture ought to be. Architects betray distaste for the work of their contemporaries and appear to be trying to do something which they are not trained to do and which the conventional wisdom of their field tells them is wrong. At the same time, laymen who had been cowed into silence are again beginning to express their dissatisfaction with Modern architecture.

We then attempted to account for these phenomena, the distaste and the fact that its expression so far has been mostly covert. Our explanation touched on the following points:

1. The locus of modern thought is a "secular religion of faith in progress."

2. Instead of progress, the world has witnessed one catastrophe after another.

3. Therefore this faith is badly shaken, to such a degree that its premises are already ceasing to lie at the roots of our thinking.

4. Architecture, like the other arts, is an expression of its time.

5. Therefore it will generally share the premises of the prevailing thought of its time.

6. Modern architecture is no exception.

7. Therefore, the roots of Modern architecture are dying.

But:

8. Architects tend to be conservative, not much inclined to radical thinking.

9. Therefore they do not understand why their work seems barren both to themselves and to others.

Let us close with a prayer that civilization is not so moribund that it will continue to work over ideas in which it no longer believes rather than risk the seeming ignominy of a return to ideas which have served it better in the past.

MALCOLM G. CHEIDLOW

The Dinsha House

A conscientious architect can hardly design a house without first visiting the site. Yet for the classicist the significance of the setting is limited to a few basic facts. We need to know the nature of the terrain but do not seek to "express" the site as Wright did, saying: "My houses spring from the soil." Nor do we seek our sites with inherent difficulties—a ravine, a cliff, a dune—so that we can overcome them in a tantrum of cantilevers and retaining walls.

Likewise, we do not try to blend our houses into the landscape by using local fieldstone, rambling plans and rustic silhouettes in the "Cotswold" manner of, say, Mellor, Meigs & Howe. (George Howe used to call this style "stockbroker's pastoral.") Such houses have a certain period charm in addition to being well and expensively built, but they are a pastiche of folk architecture. They bear the same relation to foursquare classical architecture that birdsong or the humming of bees does to a concerto.

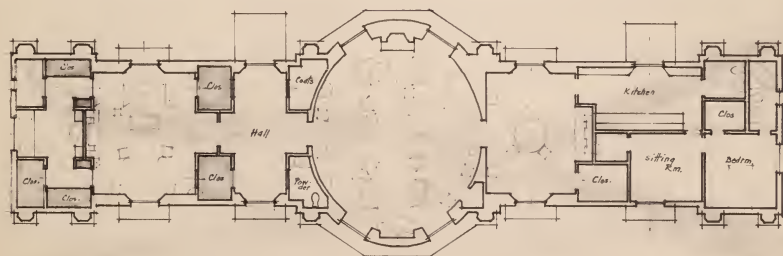
Another, large aspect of the matter of site has to do with regional or provincial styles. In regions with an established local architectural tradition a newly constructed house should look as if it belongs, as if it might always have been there. A house to be

built on the banks of the James River in Virginia should therefore be brick Georgian; on the banks of the Mississippi in Louisiana it should be Greek Revival or Creole. For historic ensembles—a row of 18th century houses on some village green or a city block designed as a whole such as Washington Square North—the best solution is a counterfeit. (A series of regional historical styles in designs adapted to modern use will be presented in a future issue of *Classical America*.)

Modern theory holds that "good" work of every period goes with every other period. The accompanying illustration will show some town square or castle where Late Gothic, Georgian and Renaissance co-exist, the whole ensemble mellowed by time. (A picture in which a *rundbogenstil* Richardsonian house is next door to a Greek Revival building would be a little closer to the facts of life.) This "museum look" is very like the eclectic style of interior decoration where every cultural base is touched: Lauristan, Congo, Baroque, Mayan, Shaker Bauhaus. . . . These daring contrasts and clashes bring us close to the sphere of window display and to the books of Malraux, where the voices of art are indeed silent since their purpose and scale are completely ignored. When the contrasting buildings are not of the highest

Plan of Dinsha residence.

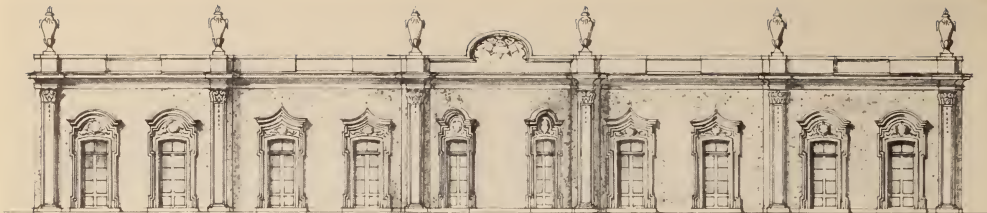
DRAWING 1



117' 0"

1/8" Scale

PLAN



East and west elevations (identical) original sketch.

DRAWING II

quality the resulting visual chaos is exactly what we see around us everyday. Is the museum look just upgraded visual chaos?

We have glanced at the house which apes nature and is to a lesser or greater degree astylar. We have considered the styles to be used in regions with an established and unbroken historical architectural tradition and in historic ensembles. Let us now consider a house for a suburb or exurb where next to nothing has to be respected and every freedom is therefore allowed.

In a private house there is room for caprice, for personal whim or even folly, all of which would be out of place in a public building. The poetry of remote times and places can be made welcome if the owner so chooses. The exotic little pavilions about the palaces and great houses of Europe are surely among architecture's delights but, with the demise of Classicism and the advent of photography, what had been a decorator's delightful *je d'esprit* became a heavy-handed form of reconstruction.

The pitfalls inherent in this approach are to be found in many different areas of artistic endeavor. Authentic Japanese sets for *Madame Butterfly* are not as suitable as 1904 Italian *japonisme* because the viewer cannot simultaneously be acclimated to Puccini and Kyoto without an unduly harsh wrench of his imagination. In the same way, Stratford-on-Avon in Dallas or French Provincial in Lake Forest look out of place to me. The literal transplantation of these provincial styles is difficult to accomplish because of their strong connections with a particular locality. On the other hand, we have all enjoyed the surreal charms of old oak, leaded glass, slate floors, beams, and lanterns on the fiftieth floor of some modern office building.

My purpose in designing the Dinsha house was to achieve the charm of historical allusion while avoiding the absurdities of overprecision. The property, located some 45 minutes northeast of Manhattan, is completely isolated with the surrounding

landscape very small in scale. The actual site for the house is a rocky eminence rising sharply above a smallish lake in a heavily glaciated region of rocky outcroppings, brooks and ponds—a setting which bears a general resemblance to the terrain behind the Petit Trianon where the ground rises to the Belvédère. It is an ideal spot for a small, self-contained estate. No balanced landscape compositions or perspectives are possible or necessary; the *jardin à l'anglaise* is built right in.

The owner's requirements for his home were simplicity itself: bed, bath, sitting and dining rooms and services. The house is small enough to allow one room to open directly into another, without the necessity of a parallel corridor. Accordingly, my design proposed an *enfilade*, or train-of-cars plan, centered upon a mirrored oval room which seemed absolutely indispensable to both Dr. Dinsha and myself.

This *salon ovale* presented a problem. There was no prototype for an oval room which extended through a building. In most cases such rooms are located on the side of the dwelling, with half of the oval projecting into exterior space. The construction often incorporates three windows, matched on the opposite interior wall by three mirrored bays. (The *château* of Champs, Royaumont, Sceaux and Amalienburg all offer examples of this kind of room.) The center window faces the main axis of a garden, and the opposite bay reflects the line of vision, which may travel over a terrace, and across a *parterre* to a pool with fountain. When, as is usual, the mirror is set over a fireplace and the mantel clock has a pendulum set with brilliants, the tiny pulsing glitter seems like the beating of a heart at the center of the whole composition of sculpture, painting, gilding, stone, sky, water and foliage.

In a lower hierarchy of rooms, those which do not center on some elaborate landscape composition, we find *salons ovales* which reflect the shimmer of sky, water and foliage as at Royaumont, Benrath



East & West Elevation

DINSHA HOUSE, CALCUTTA

May 5, 1800 J.B.D.

East and west elevations (identical) revised sketch.

DRAWING III

and now at the villa Dinsha. All of this comes under the heading of a "bringing the outdoors indoors," to use a current phrase. Among modernist architects this can mean that the gravel outside is brought inside behind a wall of plate glass, that ponderous cantilevers reach out into space or that one wall of the living room is living rock.

Every period has its variant of the oval. The ovals of Louis XIV's time have a squared-off look, something I could observe only in picture frames and cartouches since there were no true *salons ovales* in that period. I also noted that the plan of S. Andrea al Quirinale and the Piazza San Pietro by Bernini used the same squared-off oval. What I wanted lay between Bernini and the finest of all oval rooms, the *salon ovale* in the Hôtel de Soubise, constructed around 1720. The ellipse construction given in *Arch. Graphic Standards* wasn't right. Then, in a monograph on the Villa Farsetti (1767), I found an architect's plan which showed just the oval I had in mind, with the diagram of how it was constructed.

My first sketches proposed a building which had a Mansard roof and was French in manner. But the façade, interrupted by a row of ten windows, was gloomy and monotonous while the roof would have had to rise to a great height to unify the composition—what with slates, copper flashings, stone surrounds for the windows (French buildings have really got to be in stone, unless one goes to Louis XIII), and chimneys—led to our rejection of the design.

The flat-roofed villas of Italy presented a logical,

and thoroughly attractive alternative. Our problem here was size. The villas of Frascati and the *periferia romana* were all immense; those of Genoa likewise. *Venezia terra firma* held hopes but when these villas were grand they too were huge, and if small they were too simple for our purposes. The Venetian villas were designed essentially for a brief annual *villeggiatura*—simple country living. What we wanted was a pavilion of the sort that could have existed as a retreat like the Amalienburg at Nymphenburg or Sans Souci at Potsdam, a palatial building on a miniature scale. The Dinsha House was far smaller than any historical prototype although the enfilade plan, one room deep, presents a considerable façade which makes the building seem larger than its actual size.

Because of the small size, models from the grand periods were unsuitable. On the other, the minor architecture which followed (the Barroccino or Little Baroque, which shades off into the Rococo) was very usable.¹ The house was therefore to be post-Borrominian Roman domestic. Since the style had spread like wildfire through the Germanies, Russia, the Portuguese Empire and the kingdoms of Italy, we hoped that our work would be done for us by the architects of the past. Here again everything was much too big; our hopes of finding some

¹ Rome is a treasure house of this particular style. A very good book, *Architettura Minore in Italia: Roma*, was published on the subject by Countess Maria Pasolini at the turn of the century. Many of the buildings have since been destroyed.

adaptable orangery were dashed.

We did, however, come across a photograph by Philippe Jullian in *Plaisir de France*, which shows an outbuilding at Tsarkoe-Selo which seemed exactly right in its general mood. An Italian architect had built it early in the 18th century. The white-painted window-cases, pilasters, entablature and roof urns and ultramarine walls comprised a color scheme that would never have been seen in Italy, but had a certain Russian brio which conjured up birch trees in spring and summer, snow in winter. The setting was not unlike Connecticut, but above and beyond that it struck a chord of sympathy. Something in the Russian genius, so different from the *juste milieu* of France or the grandeur of Italy, seems at home here in another country of vast distances, rivers, and enthusiasms.

We had envisioned the elevations as having pilasters between the windows. When drawn up, the effect was like widespaced palings in a fence. If pilasters are to be used over a long façade they

must have a high base and entablature and embrace several floors. The design was consequently changed to piers, which have a more substantial look; a pilaster treatment was used on the face.

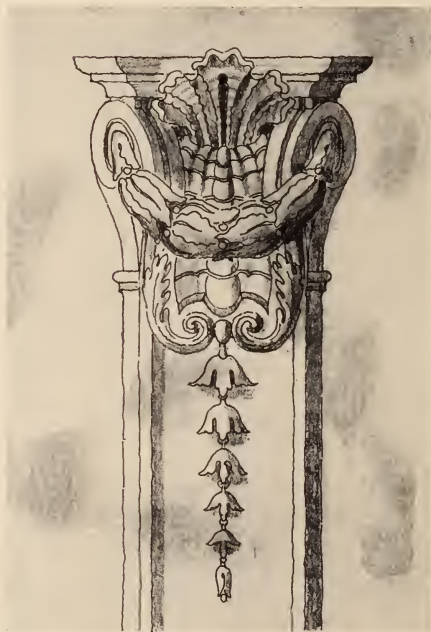
This treatment can be seen in Drawing II. Since this façade was too long we eliminated some rather unnecessary space on the interior and arrived at Drawing III, which agrees with the plan in Drawing I. Instead of being centered in their bays, the end windows balance on the center of the façade—a Palladian motif which avoids repetition and unifies the composition.

So far everything had been drawn to scale but in sketch form. When a design moves from the sketch to a precise drawing it's like the swing from one trapeze to the next. The pilaster which looked charming when indicated with a few pencil strokes now had to be rendered in large scale, with cast shadows. A splayed pilaster with a Borrominian cap and a pendant of husks was evolved; a cornice, parapet plinth and vase with a spray in verdigris cop-



Window-case and pilaster.

DRAWING IV



Original sketch for pilaster capital.

DRAWING V

per based on some I had always admired at the Villa Wurtz-Sciarrà on the Janiculum were added without too much trouble. Then came the problem of the window.

Mr. Dinsha and I both felt that, after the *salon ovale* and the long façades on the axial plan, the next absolutely essential element was a very high window with enormously deep reveals as if it were set into a wall of great thickness. This opening allows a glimpse of the ground and a glance at the sky, while the reveals reflect light into the room. The actual type of window posed a problem. Italian windows do not look out. Their function is simply to light the room; some even have steps leading up to them. Although French, or floor-length casement, windows were ideal for our purpose, they do not exist in Italy or Central Europe or, in fact, outside of France. We tried without success to fit French glazing bars, muntins and

mullions into our opening. After a survey of Central European and Russian architecture, we arrived at the design shown in Drawing IV. This window has a fixed transom and lead came are used for the muntins (the horizontal bars between the panes), which designers have always tried to make as thin as possible. I had noticed this practice in Italy, particularly in the Farnese Palace where they were installed for the Bourbons of Naples.

The next hurdle was the design of the window-case. The pilaster in Drawing IV was acceptable. We were therefore wedded to the husks and shells of Borromini; now a frame had to be devised to go with the motif. The result can be seen in Drawing IV. The pediment and lunette are too heavy, while the window itself appears squat. It is an Italian window set on the ground. Before refining it further I had photostats made of Drawing IV, which



Sketch of Mr. Dinsha's vase.

DRAWING VI



Pilaster capital, second and final revision.

DRAWING VII

I then pasted up to form a façade of six windows, as in Drawing III. Disaster. The total effect was much too heavy. It was the kind of façade that should have had a drum with a dome over it, and cascades at the end of a canal leading up to it.

We decided that my interpretation of the sketch had been faulty. When you plunge into the forest of details you are likely to pick up a trail and follow it to the bitter end. In the meantime you've lost all sense of direction, and when you come out you're on the wrong side of the forest.

The peaked, rather pagoda-like pediments which I had indicated in Drawings II and III caused some raised eyebrows among our friends, who fancied them on a personal invention. I was certain that I had seen them used somewhere but, since nothing is easier than originality, I wanted to justify them by finding a prototype. The same pediments occur on the street façades of the Colonna Palace, redone in 1730 by Nicolas Michetti, who later went to Russia. If they are mistaken for *chinoiserie*, so much the better.

A breath of fresh air was needed. We began

looking at Oppenord, Cuviliés, Meissonier, and to Dresden. A new pilaster capital was drawn (Drawing V) but it seemed insufficiently asymmetrical and daring. A small white and gold vase owned by Mr. Dinsha provided just the motif we wanted (Drawing VI). A pilaster could be designed with an asymmetrical capital (Drawing VII) where water would be indicated spilling from a shell and rippling in low relief down the shaft.* This treatment is not uncommon; I had some photographs of it that had been taken at the Château d'Eau in Montpellier. The lunettes of the over-doors (French windows) also required an asymmetrical design for which my first study, shown in Drawing VIII, proposed a fanciful shell embracing reeds.

With the polishing of these details, the plans seemed to be taking their final shape, one that would soon be implemented by the actual construction. As it turned out, our troubles were far from over.

(To be continued)

* *congélations*

JOHN BARRINGTON BAYLEY



Study of motif for lunette.

DRAWING VIII

Book Reviews

"The Academy," *Art News Annual* XXXIII, Edited by Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbery. Macmillan. (New York, 1968) \$6.95.

It is a good deal more startling to find a painting by Meissonier on the dust jacket of an *Art News Annual* than to learn, from the title page, the reason why it was used. This year's number focuses on the Academy, a theme which Meissonier was chosen to epitomize. The *Annual* does not necessarily endorse what it discusses, so it is reasonable enough for it to turn its attention to the vehicle, or shield, or a tradition to which the magazine is not as a rule sympathetic.

The Academy, that is, conservative institutionalism, is so weak a force today that it is rarely attacked with any degree of harshness. The *Annual's* relatively gentle treatment is a case in point. Even more welcome, the component articles do not share a common outlook. In the end, unlike the monthly issues of *Art News*, no single impression is conveyed. The result is grist for anybody's mill.

All the old stories are here. Milton J. Lewine writes on the Caraccis, Jacques Thullier chronicles Lebrun's codifying of Poussin, John Russell describes the Academy of West and Reynolds. Although the tradition of having the Lord Mayor and the Duke of Edinburgh grace the head table of the latter's annual banquet is still in force, not so much can be claimed for the tradition which the various academies originally undertook to sustain. The issue of academism is, in fact, no longer alive. Our own National Academy was always something of a club, where the credos varied with the membership. Now the club aspect has taken over completely; no doctrine of any sort is associated with the institution.

All of these academies, of course, have had their fangs long drawn and, for all practical purposes, are unknown to the public. The only one that remains vivid to the world is the French Academy of a century ago, the villain in the story of the persecution of the Impressionists. Whatever the merits of that ancient quarrel, it is clear enough who won. The martyrs are now enshrined and their pictures,

as a class, are the costliest in the world while the works of those who sought to suppress them are covered with ignominy. If the popular version of what took place is a caricature, it is at least true that the innovators of the 1860's and '70's were hardly accorded a hearty welcome by the reigning artistic powers who, to a degree entirely foreign to our times, did in fact constitute a powerful academy. Their influence was not so strong that its grip on civic patronage, schools, museums, and critical opinion would not presently be loosened, but its sway had been felt over the better part of a century.

The conflict with the Impressionists, which may have accounted for the Academy's demise, (more likely, it was no more than a symptom of it), did not have any appreciable effect on its activities at the time. Still, that conflict represented the only issue where the Academy functioned as a champion of doctrine. Its more habitual role was that of a judge of competence. Ten thousand artists suffered at its hands, for the Academicians were wont to interpret the espousal of contrary principles as a lack of skill. This might seem a testimony to the success with which the Academy had imposed its principles; in actual fact it was little concerned with ideas. Even the issue raised by the Impressionists only resembled, without actually being, a question of artistic fundamentals.

By the time Meissonier, Gérôme, and Bouguereau were in the saddle, the French Academy had become wonderfully liberal—or lax. In effect, anything went. Nothing shows this more clearly than the dispute with Monet and his friends, in which method, not purpose, was the point of contention. Monet, chided for the falsity of his color, retorted that it was the Academicians, not her, who suffered blindness to natural appearances. Neither party took exception to the uses to which the representation of nature might be put, but clung firmly to its own version of the verisimilitude of that representation. Impressionism's eventual triumph meant only that a system of execution was replaced; standards of form and artistic intent were unaffected because the

Academy had been without them to begin with.

The volume under discussion barely touches on the important subject of purpose. Instead, an article titled "Antidissestablishmentarianism" offers a comic selection of Salon pictures. The choice, if cruel, may not be unfair; the paintings, after all, were officially approved. Ingres' influence is weighed in an essay by Robert Rosenblum, who has scant praise for the painters who displayed it. A seemingly pointless burlesque by Dali, "The Incendiary Firemen," accompanies some military paintings by Detailles and Meissonier. The only essay of any consequence is Gerald M. Ackerman's piece on the most formidable academician of them all, Jean-Léon Gérôme. Surprisingly for our time and the auspices under which it appears, the article is wholly laudatory.

Gérôme was reputedly the very archetype of the oppressive official artist. Ackerman questions this supposed intolerance, but places his chief emphasis on the artist's immense artistic and technical attainments. It is ironic that these accomplishments are customarily neglected in favor of Gérôme's political role in the drama of nineteenth century painting when it was to these very talents that he owed his position of pre-eminence and authority. More pertinent to our own immediate purpose, however, is that his career illustrates the path taken by academism itself.

Gérôme's first successes were a pair of ideally Classical compositions, *Anacreon* and *The Cock-fighters*. Few would be able to distinguish the former from Poussin's very similar *A Dance to the Music of Time*, although Gérôme's painting is more attractive and better designed than its prototype. Themes from his Near Eastern travels soon replaced those of antiquity to which, however, he occasionally returned in such famous pictures as *Phryne before the Elders*. No matter how contemporary or anecdotal his subjects, he persevered for a long time in his adherence to the broad outlines and clearly defined planes that are the substance of Classical composition.

It was not to his Classical bent but rather to the magic power of his rendering that Gérôme owed his fame. The perfectly drawn figures, the minuteness of touch arrested the attention of all Paris. Far second to these skills, though much noted, was the brilliance of his invention. The Classical mold in which his ideas were cast passed utterly without comment, taken for granted as a holdover from his traditionalist training. Both popular and critical opinion ranked him with a handful of accomplished artists who were

distinguished by their own great skill but were in no wise Gérôme's peer as a designer. What is more, these artists were unmarked by any trace of Classicism.

As Gérôme's renown increased the Classical and intellectual content of his work came to seem a gratuitous addition, unrelated to the esteem showered on his paintings. His own preoccupation with this disregarded aspect of his art gradually diminished. More important, in fifty years of teaching, not one of his thousands of pupils ever reflected the Classical outlook of Gérôme's early work. The Classical standard remained a personal belief which he did not demand of others. Gérôme was not alone in this attitude. The Academy itself, of which he was a leader for most of his mature life, never required any exhibitor or medalist to display a Classical bias. The Classical ideal had become a matter of utter indifference.

Classicism's abandonment by the very institution presumably most dedicated to keeping it alive was a decisive factor in its ultimate decline into oblivion. We, who have lost hold of this tradition, are helpless to say how it can best be revived, much less protected. An academy may well be the surest instrument, but we will have to look very far into the past to find any support of this hypothesis.

—Pierce Rice

Architecture and Society: Selected Essays of Henry Van Brunt, edited with an introductory monograph by William A. Coles. Belknap Press (Cambridge, Mass., 1969). \$15.

The name, Henry Van Brunt, registers but faintly. A few Harvard men will recognize the co-architect of the University's best building, Memorial Hall, and some residents of Kansas City may even acknowledge him its greatest citizen in the arts and letters of the last century. More probably, if his name does carry weight for others, it is that he left the most wonderful description of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. It is this last, really, which arouses our curiosity about the man, his work and his writings.

Thanks to Professor Coles, and to the Belknap Press, we have Van Brunt in full dress. Here are his principal essays and articles between two covers, supplemented by more than 200 illustrations which are tantamount to a panorama of American architecture in the latter half of the last century. And

there is the editor's monograph. In all probability its thorough, yet easy elucidation is due to his being a Professor of English, thus making him better equipped than, let us say, an art historian, to handle the intricacies of his subject. The influence of English writers, such as the poet Coleridge, on American concepts of art in the last century was enormous and is, if anything, stronger than ever today. One has to start with them.

Professor Coles has sought out and separated the threads of the several nineteenth century theories that permeated Van Brunt's thinking. Through his analysis of the architect's writings we can see what shaped American architecture as it matured to become the American Renaissance as in no other exposition of the subject.

Henry Van Brunt stands out not only because of the reach of his knowledge and the acuteness of his observation but also because of his admirable, almost Johnsonian prose. Certainly he stands unrivalled among American writers on architecture. This quality obviously is what challenged Professor Coles who sees in the architect a writer of major stature as well as an outstanding observer of the architectural scene. We are very much in his debt for bringing this great American, too long neglected, out of the shadows.

As *Architecture and Society* is of prime importance in the exploring the Classical thesis and the theories that have corroded it, arrangements have been made with the Harvard University Press to obtain it for members at a 25 per cent discount. Members interested should send in \$12, payable to CLASSICAL AMERICA, and the book will be sent directly by the Press.

—HENRY HOPE REED

Paperbacks

If the general standards of such book production were (or *could* be) a little higher and the quality of the halftones a lot better, the recent flow of paperbacks and inexpensive clothbound reprints devoted to architecture would be very heartening indeed. For it is now possible to build a library of a good many of the key books on Western architecture, all in volumes priced at \$5 or less. The list covers surveys of big chunks of the subject, monographs on single architects or the buildings of a particular locality or style, dictionaries, and the

books on architectural ornament and stage design.

Students of American Classical building (1890 to the present) will find little in this pile of books that covers their subject thoroughly. Yet, as a change from only ten years ago guidebooks to particular localities are beginning to give this field some attention. Classical building prior to 1830 has been well documented in paperbacks and cheap reprints, and several series of publications merit special mention. Best of all is the Penguin Books list which for 15 years now has been making very good contributions. The many and varied publications of Dover Books are praiseworthy in that the firm often reissues paperbacks of books in their large original format.

Two series of hardback reprints (Bonanza Books and Bramhall House) have brought back many scarce books on American building in the Colonial and Federal periods. It seems a shame that the books in those series must be merchandized as fake "remainders" or publishers' overstocks rather than for what they are, an excellent reprint program. Let us hope that a quickening interest in American Classical building of this century will lead Bonanza and Dover to such hard-to-find studies of the period as G. H. Edgell's *The American Architecture of To-Day* (1924) or to bring back Talbott Hamlin's *American Spirit in Architecture*.

The present article will cover some of the recent paperbacks and hardcover reprints that seem either extremely meritorious or extremely metricious. The bias will be frankly one of enthusiasm for Classical architecture.

Several American cities stand out as monuments to European Classical building. New York must inevitably be cited, as must Boston, Philadelphia and Richmond. All of these cities offer fine examples of Colonial-Federal architecture and of the Classical style as practiced between 1890 and 1940. Atlanta and Detroit also deserve mention, primarily for Classical buildings of the present century.

Our most Classical city, however, is Washington, D.C. The reasons for its pre-eminence are several, the first one being the geometrical layout of its streets and parks. This and other facets of its Classicism are clearly indicated in the American Institute of Architects' *A Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D.C.*, edited by Hugh Newell Jacobsen, with an introduction by Francis Donald Lethbridge (Praeger, \$2.95). The anthology proves Washington to be abundant, indeed superabundant,

in good Classical building of the twentieth century; almost every important American architect who sailed under this flag is represented. Included are two major buildings by Arthur Brown, Jr., the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Department of Labor. Brown is becoming recognized as the culminating figure in American Classical architecture. This assessment would move the chronological center of the Classical movement of this century forward to about 1930 from the days of the major commissions of McKim, Mead and White, who are traditionally cited as our leading Classicists. Sadly, the plates in the *Guide* show little of Brown's characteristically lavish rendering of the French style of Jules Hardouin-Mansart; his limestone buildings employ the complete Vitruvian vocabulary and are executed with expensive and meticulous architectural sculpture.

But on to other delights: Charles Platt's Freer Gallery and the Kelsey-Cret Pan American Union are obvious examples. So, too, is Henry Bacon's majestic Lincoln Memorial. Others are not so obvious: a full, main-block-with-wing Palladian house unmistakably in the manner of William Lawrence Bottomley (the Devore House at 2000 24th Street, N.W.), the Classical McKim, Mead and White Arlington Memorial Bridge, much traveled over but rarely looked at, and an embassy building which seems an exquisite rendering of an eighteenth century Parisian *hôtel particulier*. The latter is Horace Trumbauer's Belgian Embassy at 2300 Foxhall Road. If it immediately evokes the Hôtel Biron, the Hôtel Matignon and (as the *Guide* suggests) the Hôtel de Charolais, it also suggests that Trumbauer improved upon his sources. Washington is likewise fortunate to have a complete building by Sir Edwin Lutyens, no less a one than the red brick, late Stuart British Embassy at 3100 Massachusetts Avenue. The embassy, which is in Lutyens' "archaeologically correct" phase, is one of the most satisfying structures in the entire city. When all this work is added to the many excellent Colonial and Federal monuments of Washington and Alexandria, including fine buildings by Mills, Bulfinch and Latrobe as well as the great Capitol and White House projects, Washington can be ranked among the world's finest Classical cities—if not with Paris and Rome, then at least with London or Prague.

The *Guide* treats this Classical cornucopia in a curious fashion. There is the expected lavish treatment of contemporary building (or such modest contemporary building as Washington possesses); this

could hardly be otherwise in an A.I.A. publication. The *coverage* of Classical building since 1890 is equally lavish. Very few worthwhile projects have been overlooked, but when the editor offers his descriptions of this style he is very guarded. Classical architecture is abundantly presented but, hark! Classicism may nevertheless be the Enemy. Of the Union Station Jacobsen says: "This was the first building to be inspired by the McMillan Commission—Roman Beaux Arts, direct from the Columbia Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. The entrance loggia, the main waiting room, and the concourse, *however*, are among Washington's truly monumental interior spaces' (italics supplied). And of the Lincoln Memorial: "White and solemn, [it] attains a nobility which far transcends its eclectic heritage."

But even so, does not the *Guide* suggest an important change in American architectural taste? Its dozens of citations of twentieth century Classical building may be compared to Huson Jackson's *A Guide to New York Architecture, 1660-1952*, published by Reinhold in the previous decade. Jackson limited his discussion of Classical building of this century to Grand Central Station and the Morgan Library. Not only does he astonishingly omit the New York Public Library and the then intact Pennsylvania Station by McKim, Mead and White, but he covers none of Manhattan's abundant houses and churches in the Georgian and continental Renaissance styles.

The easily pocketed 4½ x 8½ format of the Washington *Guide* seems almost ideal. There are good maps, something which local guidebooks often lack. Neighborhoods are shown in detail and, in addition, a fold-out map of the entire city supplies a key to the various sections covered in the book. One could wish that a few of the many excellent halftones were offered in full-page format and that some of the plates (e.g., the illustrations of Arthur Brown's buildings) had focussed on a single important detail, such as an entablature section, rather than attempt to show the whole building.

Nearby Virginia has been building houses in the cottage pitched-roof-and-sash-window style of Williamsburg almost continuously since the eighteenth century. Indeed, it can be said to have inspired a national style. The "Williamsburg" house has never been more in vogue or more often repeated than just now. But Thomas T. Waterman, author of *The Mansions of Virginia* (reissued by Bonanza Books, \$4.95), is mainly concerned with a rather different kind of house, namely, the Classical, Palla-

dian "academic" Virginia mansion which was at its most elegant and formal in plantation sites away from Williamsburg rather than in the town proper. Waterman's method or architectural history, his skillful attempts to trace the English and Italian sources of every major Colonial building in Virginia has long fascinated architectural students. I am told that some younger scholars, particularly those associated with the fellowship program of the Winterthur Collection, have begun sharply to question some of his findings. Particular details may be open to dispute, but the pedagogical value of Waterman's books is unequalled. *Mansions* is really a whole method of learning about architecture.

The experienced reader will, of course, approach Waterman with the idea of adding to his knowledge of Western Classical architecture. The careful novice will learn how to read a façade and a floor plan; he will become well versed in the details of Italian and English Palladian styles; he will come to know the particular sorts of brickwork, woodwork, moldings and constructional details that invariably run through Virginia building of the Colonial period. And all should find the book satisfying in its demonstration of how American Colonial building is related to its complex European sources.

Perusal of the book makes Georgian Virginia seem like some remote English shire where the seignorial houses were much simpler and smaller than the usual great English manion (e.g., the sort of buildings which Sir Christopher Hussey illustrated in his *English Country Houses*). And yet there are notable regional peculiarities in Virginia. No English house of the scale and amplitude of Westover would have been built with such an austere lack of ornament. The peculiar Palladian masses of Brandon and Battersea comprise an intimate and intricate treatment of Italian building absolutely unlike anything in England, where Palladio is always the Villa Rotonda or the Villa Malcontenta, never the Villa Maser or the Villa Comello. Mount Vernon is, of course, wholly American, with a portico that smacks of the Caribbean or the Canary Islands. In England it would be exotic indeed—something to rank with the Nash's Royal Pavilion.

The book invites speculation about other Colonial building in the Western hemisphere. North American ecclesiastical architecture of the period seems outclassed by its South American counterpart both in originality and bravura of execution.

Private residences are another matter. The Colonial survivals in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and

New England easily surpass anything in South America, with the possible exception of the Torre Tagle Palace in Lima. As *The Mansions of Virginia* shows, however, the relation of American domestic building to its British antecedents closely parallels that of South American building to its Spanish sources. Both testify to a rustic degree of remove from the mother country and to the time lag between Europe and America. An informed visitor to the Quinta da Presa in Lima cannot help noticing that it bears exactly the same relation to the Plaza Mayor building in Salamanca as Mount Airy in Virginia does to certain Scottish Palladian houses.

Andrea Palladio, the great Vicentine architect of the sixteenth century, has received surprisingly little attention from English-speaking scholars and writers despite his enormous prestige and influence in both England and America. Books about Palladio's numerous followers comprise a voluminous bibliography, but only rarely has Palladio himself been an object of study. James S. Ackerman's *Palladio* (\$2.25 in the Penguin Books' "Architect and Society" series) helps to fill this gap with a serious, scholarly (if somewhat brief) monograph by an American art historian of high rank and first rate qualifications. Anyone who has used Professor Ackerman's *The Architecture of Michelangelo* knows how sympathetically, sensibly and lucidly he can describe Classical architecture.

One section of the book attempts to prove an ambitious thesis to the effect that economic considerations determined the sites and plans of the famous Palladian villas. Economic theories of architecture are extremely fashionable these days, and not always well founded, but Professor Ackerman argues his case quite plausibly. He suggests that the sites for the villas were previously uncultivated lands where newcomers could acquire profitable holdings. The buildings themselves had to be central to the agricultural operations and had to organize service structures and dwellings into a single complex. Furthermore, the book offers a persuasive explanation of why Palladio's plans proved so adaptable in Great Britain and the United States. He points out that the conditions under which Palladian houses were built in eighteenth century Virginia and Maryland were almost identical to those of the Veneto two centuries earlier.

Professor Ackerman writes well enough, but readers who are not professional scholars might wish that his descriptions had some of the élan (or even some of the reckless and absorbing speculation)

that a really informed amateur like Sacheverell Sitwell can bring to the experience of works of art. The plates in *Palladio* deserve especial commendation. Professor Ackerman has argued elsewhere that we need fresh views of Italian architecture; that the precise but, by the 1960's, too often shown views from the great Alinari and Anderson collections have grown stale with repetition and can no longer reveal anything "new." He has acted on his own recommendation and illustrated his text with an excellent series of (presumably) unpublished photographs by Phyllis Dearborn Massar.

This reviewer's reaction to Sir John Summerson's *Inigo Jones* (\$2.25, another in the "Architect and Society" series from Penguin Books) is one of extreme frustration. Summerson's careful scholarship has sharply whittled down Jones's possible attributions, so that his *oeuvre* now seems quite limited. Even Jones's association with Wilton House appears based on extremely shaky evidence. Unquestionably the celebrated Banqueting House in Whitehall is a building of high polish, force, and—in its ingenious and much heralded handling of the engaged columns of the center bays—subtlety. It would have been a notable production in the Paris of Louis VIII and respectable if *retardataire* in the Rome of Bernini and Borromini. But a second look at the Queen's House, Greenwich, makes this seem merely a pretty and immaculate dwelling with the blandness of some Classical student union, circa 1930, in a Midwestern land grant university. And Jones's completed design for St. Paul's Cathedral seems astonishingly naive—a composition as rustic as some remote Latin American church when it is compared with Roman and Parisian models. In short, we close the book with the impression that Jones's work was neither particularly interesting in itself, nor especially influential. His major effect on subsequent architecture in the English-speaking world seems to have been as an example to draw British builders to Italian sources. Indeed, it now seems hard to think of Jones as a really major figure in a class with Wren, Kent or Nash, although he surely belongs at the level of Nicholas Hawksmoor and Thomas Archer. And nothing could be more interesting than Summerson's discussion of the sources of Jones's Covent Garden, which he sees as highly sophisticated for its day in having been a deliberate attempt at artificial rusticity.

The Architecture of America: A Social And Cultural History, by John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, is the latest attempt at a comprehen-

sive survey of our country's building. Atlantic-Little Brown recently reissued it as a somewhat abridged paperback for \$3.95.

This is a very disturbing book. Although the Colonial and Federal periods receive satisfactory treatment, the same does not hold true for the Classical production of 1885-1950. Classicism is not exactly neglected—indeed, the coverage is surprisingly generous—but much of the commentary is patronizing. Then, too, the book is guilty of a number of omissions unsettling for those of us who feel that the Beaux-Arts School did much of its best work not at the beginning of the period (*ca.* 1900), but much later, in the Twenties and Thirties. Arthur Brown, Jr. is mentioned (twice, in fact) but no reference at all is made to his Classical work. It seems odd that a general history of American architecture should entirely omit the San Francisco City Hall, which some critics have called the finest Classical building in our recent history and which, moreover, is one of the most sumptuous, most lavish, most expensively built buildings in the whole hemisphere. Incomprehensible, too, is the authors' failure to include in the index such stalwarts of the Classical Twenties and Thirties as Bottomley, Mott B. Schmidt, or Aymar Embury II.

Burchard and Bush-Brown save their praise for the fashionable trends of the day. They are not unusual in complaining that so many major commissions in the first half of this century went to Classical or Gothic-Romanesque architects rather than to the giants of Modernism, Wright and Sullivan. The fact amounts to a standard "atrocious" for critics who profess a liberal, modern view of building trends. Although this Modernist bias does not prevent the authors from hailing the Beaux-Arts education for encouraging "enormous proficiency in drawing, audacity in composition, exact knowledge of materials, form and details, and a keen sense of space and finish," they can nevertheless be very waspish about Classicism. "Most wealthy clients of a sentimental turn," so they claim, "and this meant most wealthy clients, demanded historical copying, and architects abounded to supply copies." We might well ask whether the Classically-minded client is always "sentimental" and the Modernist "hip." Must we automatically scorn the reader of Montaigne and praise devotees of Mailer and Burroughs?

The book is illustrated with the work of architectural photographers whom most authorities would call the best in America. This reviewer happens to

consider most American photography disappointing, particularly the Ezra Stoller school. These inevitably antiseptic, "wind-swept" scenes appear distorted for some artistic or "creative" effect at the expense of techniques that reveal the intrinsic qualities of a building. Wayne Andrews is wonderfully precise but there is a monotony to his strong sunshine and lens filter effects. Excepting the redoubtable G. E. Kidder Smith and John Barrington Bayley, the writer prefers the work of European photographers. *The Architecture of America* would have benefitted from pictures

by the Englishman A. F. Kersting, the Hungarian Karol Plicka, or even more from those largely unheralded photographers who worked for *Country Life* in the early part of this century. Their work remains unequalled for its fidelity to the infinite varieties of light at play upon buildings, the way it captures the texture of weathered architecture and the clarity of presentation, which reveals buildings and details almost as if the observer were confronting them directly.

—H. Stafford Bryant, Jr.

Editor, Patricia Dreyfus.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS: JOHN BARRINGTON BAYLEY
(Except those in "The Vision Spurned:"
New-York Historical Society)

Ornamental urn, Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn, New York. As is usual in a mere vessel which is destined to contain in one form or another the fruits of the earth, as opposed to a trophy, which is more apt to be embellished with a supernal symbolism, the ornamentation on this krater is telluric.

The handles recall not only Asklepiian associations—medicine, herbs, health, cure by telluric pharmacology, etc.,—but also earlier ophidian cults which were eminently telluric, primitive and saturnine (in Italy) and in time were supplanted by supernal rites. The classic example of such cults was to be found at Delphi where the worship of Apollo, after a struggle which mythology records at length, superseded the veneration of the Pythia, the serpent. The Pythia, once vanquished, was by name assumed to indicate Apollo in his vaticinal capacity, *videlicet* Pythian Apollo.

The tripod at Delphi—a portion of which can be examined today along the spina of the Circus at Constantinople—, on which the Pythian oracle took up her position, consisted of three entwined serpents.

The serpent represents wisdom—"the wisdom of the serpent", but in a folk, traditional, orally transmitted, even gnostic, yet in all events telluric sense,—and is in apposition to that splendid Apollonian illumination, the rays of which reveal but also consume.

The olive is the symbol of peace, of agricultural industry, of plenty. It was presented to the Athenians by Athena herself in an attempt to lure her eponymous city from maritime distractions. Again, it is a telluric sign par excellence.

The bay, as distinguished from the 'laurus nobilis' which, of course, belongs to Apollo, is a more modest, almost rustic indication of felicity in success.

Those whose martial exploits did not warrant granting a "triumph" SPQR. were often accorded an "ovation". The returning Imperator walked rather than rode. There was no arch to commemorate his passage. Rather than a bullock, the sacrificial victim was generally a ewe or a sheep, (hence the etymology of the word "ovation"), while the brow of the worthy was crowned not with laurel but with the humbler bay, *minora praeemia*.

